

a Government should move toward its true goal as directly, as surely, and for as long as possible; without, however, losing sight of the fact that all the works of men are imperfect, transitory and perishable, as they themselves are.

[10] I have purposely omitted many very important topics about which I did not feel sufficiently knowledgeable to judge soundly. I leave it up to more knowledgeable and wiser men than myself to do so; and I bring these long ramblings to an end with apologies to Count Wielhorski for having taken up so much of his time with them. Although I think differently from other men, I do not flatter myself with being wiser than they, nor that he will find in my reveries anything that might prove really useful to his fatherland; but my wishes for its prosperity are too true, too pure, too disinterested that pride at contributing to it could increase my zeal. May it triumph over its enemies, become and remain peaceful, happy and free, set a great example to the universe, and, profiting from the patriotic labors of Count Wielhorski, find and form in its midst many Citizens who resemble him!

5

SELECTED LETTERS

LETTER TO M. D'OFFREVILLE

Montmorency, 4 October 1761

[1] The question which you put to me in your letter of 15 September, Sir, is important and weighty; knowing whether there is a demonstrable morality or not hinges on how it is resolved.

[2] Your adversary maintains that everyone, no matter what he does, acts only in relation to himself, and that even in the most sublime acts of virtue, even in the purest works of charity, everyone relates everything to himself.

[3] You, Sir, you think that one ought to do good for the sake of good, even without any returns in personal interest; that the good works one relates to oneself are no longer acts of virtue, but of amour propre; you add that our alms are without merit if we give them only out of vanity, or with a view to dismissing from our minds the idea of the miseries of human life, and in this you are right.

[4] But as to the heart of the matter, I must admit to you that I am of your adversary's opinion: for when we act, we have to have a motive for acting, and this motive cannot be extrinsic to ourselves, since it is ourselves it sets to work; it is absurd to imagine that being myself, I will act as if I were another. Is it not true that if you were told that a body is being pushed without anything touching it, you would say that is not conceivable? The same holds regarding morality, when one believes oneself to be acting without any interest.

[5] But the word interest calls for explanation, because you might attach to it a meaning, you and your adversary, such that you agree without knowing it, and [alternatively] he might attach to it a meaning so crude that you would then be the one who is right.

[6] There is a sensible and tangible interest which bears solely on our material well-being, on fortune, on consideration, on the physical goods that may accrue to us from another's good opinion. Whatever one does for the sake of such an interest only produces a good of the same order, as with the good a merchant does by selling his wares on the best terms he can. If I oblige someone with a view to acquiring rights to his gratitude, I am nothing but a

merchant engaged in commerce, and cheating the buyer at that. If I give alms to be esteemed charitable and to enjoy the advantages attending on this esteem, I am again nothing but a merchant buying reputation. More or less the same holds if I give these alms only to rid myself of a beggar's importunacy or of the sight of his misery; all actions of this kind which have some external advantage in view cannot be called good deeds, and one does not say of a merchant who has conducted his business well that he has done so virtuously.

[7] There is another interest, which is entirely unrelated to social advantages, which is relative only to ourselves, to the good of our soul, to our absolute well-being, which therefore I call spiritual or moral interest, by contrast to the first; an interest which, in spite of having no sensible, material objects, is no less true, no less great, no less solid, and, in a word, the only interest which tends toward our genuine happiness, since it is intimately related to our nature. This, Sir, is the interest which virtue pursues and ought to pursue, and which in no way deprives the actions it inspires of merit, purity, or moral goodness.

[8] First of all, in the system of Religion, that is to say of punishments and rewards in the other life, you see that the interest of pleasing the Author of our being and the supreme judge of our actions is so important as to outweigh the greatest evils, as to cause true believers to fly to martyrdom, and at the same time so pure as to be capable of ennobling the most sublime duties. The law to act well is derived from reason itself, and a Christian needs only logic in order to have virtue.

[9] But besides this interest, which might be viewed as in some way extrinsic to the issue, as bearing on it only by the explicit will of God, you might perhaps ask me whether there is some other interest which is, by its nature, tied more intimately, more necessarily to virtue, and which should make us love virtue solely for its own sake. This is related to other questions, the discussion of which exceeds the limits of a letter, and into which I will therefore not attempt to inquire here: such as, whether we have a natural love of order, of the morally beautiful; whether this love can by itself be sufficiently lively to override all our passions; whether conscience is innate to man's heart, or is only the work of prejudices and of education: for in this latter case it is clear that since no one has within himself any interest in acting well, he cannot do good except

for the sake of the profit which he expects in return from others; that therefore only fools believe in virtue and only dupes practice it; such is the new philosophy.

[10] Without here getting involved in this metaphysics which would lead us too far, I will leave it at submitting to you a fact which you may propose for discussion to your adversary, and which, when well discussed, may perhaps tell you more about his true sentiments than you could learn about them if you remained at the level of generality of your thesis.

[11] In England, when a man faces a criminal charge, twelve jurors, locked up in a room in order to deliberate in light of the proceedings whether he is or is not guilty, do not leave that room and do not get anything to eat until they all agree, so that their judgment is always unanimous and conclusive regarding the fate of the accused.

[12] In one of these deliberations, with the proofs appearing to be convincing, eleven jurors condemned him without hesitation; but the twelfth held out so stubbornly for his acquittal without being willing to offer any other reason than that he believed him innocent, that all the others, seeing him prepared to die of hunger rather than to share their opinion, in order not to risk the same fate rallied to his opinion, and the accused was let go, absolved.

[13] Once the case was settled, some of the jurors secretly pressed their colleague to tell them the reason for his stubbornness, and finally learned that it was he himself who had committed the crime of which the other man stood accused, and that he had been less horrified by the prospect of death than by the prospect of causing the death of the innocent man accused of his own crime.

[14] Put this case to your man and do not fail to examine with him this juror's state in all of its aspects. He was not a just man, since he had committed a crime, and in this [particular] affair the enthusiasm of virtue could not have elevated his heart and made him despise life: he had the most real interest in condemning the accused in order to bury with him the imputation of the crime; he must have feared that his invincible stubbornness would rouse suspicions as to its true cause, and be a first clue against him. Prudence and concern for his safety would, so it seems, have required that he do what he did not do, and no discernible sensible interest had to lead him to do what he did; yet only a very powerful interest

could have swayed him, thus, in the secret of his heart, to run all sorts of risks: what, then, was this interest to which he sacrificed his very life?

[15] To deny the fact would be unfairly to evade the issue; for one can always assume it, and inquire what, setting aside all extrinsic interests, any man of sense who is neither virtuous nor a villain would do in such a case out of self-interest.

[16] Stating the two cases in turn, one, that the juror voted to condemn the accused and caused him to perish in order to secure his own safety; the other, that he absolved him, as he did do, at his own risk; then, tracing the rest of the juror's life and his likely fate in either case, press your man to pass a definitive judgment on this conduct, and to state clearly the interests and motives for and against the side he would have chosen; then, if your quarrel is not settled, you will at least know whether you do or do not understand one another.

[17] In case he distinguishes between interest in committing or not committing a crime, and interest in performing or not performing a good deed, you will easily get him to see that, on our hypothesis, the reason for refraining from an advantageous crime one can commit with impunity is of the same kind as the reason for performing a burdensome good deed with no other witness than heaven and yourself; for aside from being no more than just when we do whatever good we might do, one can have no inherent interest in not doing evil without having a similar interest in doing good; both flow from the same source, and cannot be separated.

[18] Above all, Sir, consider that one should never strain things beyond the truth, nor confuse, as the Stoics did, happiness with virtue. It is certain that to do good for the sake of good is to do it for one's own sake, out of self-interest, since it gives the soul an internal satisfaction, a contentment with itself without which there is no true happiness; it is further certain that the wicked are all wretched, regardless of what may be their apparent fate, because external happiness gets poisoned in a corrupt soul just as sensory pleasure does in an unhealthy body; but it is false that the good are all happy in this world; and just as a body's being in good health does not suffice for it to have the food which it requires, so a soul's being healthy does not suffice for it to obtain all the goods which it needs. Although only good people can live content, that is not to

say that every good person lives content. Virtue does not bestow happiness, but it alone teaches one to enjoy it when one has it; virtue does not protect against the evils of this life, and it does not secure its goods; nor does vice for all its cunning do so; but virtue makes us bear the first with greater patience, and savor the others with greater delight. We therefore have, in any case, a genuine interest in cultivating it, and we do well to work on behalf of this interest, although there are cases when it, by itself, without the expectation of a life to come, would not suffice. Such is my sentiment regarding the question you put to me.

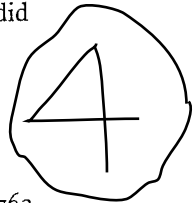
[19] In thanking you for thinking well of me, I nevertheless advise you, Sir, no longer to waste your time defending or praising me. All the good and the evil one says about a man one does not know means little. If those who accuse me are wrong, it is up to my conduct to justify me; any other defense is useless or superfluous.

[20] I should have answered you sooner; but the state in which I live, daily struggling with pain and death, must excuse this delay. I do not answer complimentary letters, and I would not have answered yours either if the question which you put to me in it did not make it my duty to tell you my opinion about it.

I greet you wholeheartedly,

LETTER TO USTERI

Motiers, 18 July 1763



[1] You must, my dear Friend, make allowances for the visit I did not pay you: for I set out last month on this wished-for pilgrimage, not with M. Moulton, who is too poor a walker, but with M. de Sauttern; but the deterrent of bad weather which delayed us several days in an inn, my weakness, and the length of the journey, made me give up on it, much as I wished for it, and we retraced our steps after a ten days' absence which took us no farther than Estavayé. I have not given up hope of being more fortunate another time; but my travel companion has left, and I must admit to you that in my state I lack the courage to tackle alone a trip of forty leagues there, and as many back.

[2] However weary I may be of disputes and objections, and however repugnant I find it to take up the precious intercourse of

friendship with such skirmishes, I continue to address the difficulties you raise, since you demand it. I will therefore tell you with my usual frankness that you do not seem to me to have clearly grasped the state of the question. The great Society, human Society in general, is founded on humanity, on universal beneficence; I say and have always said that Christianity is favorable to this Society.

[3] But particular Societies, political and civil Societies, have an altogether different principle. They are purely human establishments from which true Christianity, consequently, detaches us, as it does from everything that is merely earthly: nothing but men's vices make these establishments necessary, and nothing but human passions preserve them. Take away all vices from your Christians; they will no longer need magistrates or laws: deprive them of all human passions, the civil bond straightway loses all of its resilience; no more emulation, no more glory, no more striving for preferment, particular interest is destroyed, and for want of appropriate support, the political State languishes.

[4] Your assumption of a political and vigorous Society of Christians, who may even all of them be perfect, is therefore contradictory. It is also extravagant if you will not allow a single unjust man, not a single usurper in it. Will it be more perfect than the Apostles? And yet in its midst there was a Judas. Will it be more perfect than the Angels? And the devil, they say, came from it. My dear friend, you forget that your Christians will be men, and that the perfection I assume them to have is such as humanity admits of. My book is not made for Gods.

[5] Nor is this all: You attribute to your Citizens an exquisitely delicate moral tact, and why? Because they are good Christians. What! can one not be a good Christian on your view without being a La Rochefoucault or a La Bruyère? What then was our Lord thinking about when he blessed the poor in spirit? In the first place, this assertion is not reasonable; since delicacy of moral tact is acquired only by dint of comparisons, and is even infinitely better developed with the vices one hides than with the virtues one does not hide. In the second place, the assertion is at odds with all experience, and one consistently sees that it is in the largest Cities, among the most corrupt people that one learns better to delve into hearts, better to observe men, better to interpret their speeches by their sentiments, better to distinguish reality from appearance. Will you

deny that there are infinitely better moral observers in Paris than in Switzerland, or would you conclude from this that one lives more virtuously in Paris than among you?

[6] You say that your Citizens would be infinitely shocked by the first occurrence of injustice. I believe it; but by the time they noticed it, it would be too late to attend to it, and all the more so as they would not readily allow themselves to think ill of their neighbor, nor to place a bad construction on what might admit of a good one; it would be too much at odds with charity. You are not unaware that the artfully ambitious take great care not to start out with acts of injustice. On the contrary, they spare nothing in order initially to gain public trust and esteem by an outward performance of virtue. They cast off the mask and strike their massive blows only once they hold the winning hand, and there is no going back. Cromwell was recognized as a Tyrant only after he had, for fifteen years, been taken to be the avenger of the laws and the defender of Religion.

[7] In order to preserve your Christian Republic, you make its neighbors as just as you make it; well and good; I grant that for all intents and purposes it will defend itself well enough, provided it is not attacked. As regards the courage you attribute to its soldiers by virtue of the mere love of self-preservation, that is a courage no one lacks; I have attributed to it a motive that is even more powerful with Christians, namely the love of duty. About this, I believe that by way of reply I can refer you to my Book where this point is discussed well. How can you fail to see that only great passions do great things, and that whoever has no other passion than that for his Salvation will never do anything great in the temporal realm? If Mucius Scaevola had been no more than a Saint, do you think that he would have succeeded in breaking the siege of Rome? You might perhaps refer me to the great-souled Judith: but our hypothetical Christian women being less barbarously coquettish, will not, I believe, go and seduce their enemies, and then lie with them only to massacre them in their sleep.

[8] My dear friend, I do not propose to convince you. I know that no two heads are organized alike, and that after a good many disputations, a good many objections, a good many clarifications, everyone always ends up adhering to the same sentiment as before. To repeat, I answer you because you wish me to do so; but I will

love you no less for not thinking as I do. I have stated my opinion to the public, and I believed myself in duty bound to state it in matters that are important and relevant to humanity. Besides, I may have been mistaken always, and I have undoubtedly been mistaken often. I have stated my reasons, it is up to the public, it is up to you to weigh them, to judge them, to choose. As for myself, I know no more, and it seems to me perfectly good that those who have other sentiments keep them, so long as they leave me in peace with mine.

[9] M. L. M. D. A. whose name you ask me for is the late M. le Marquis d'Argenson, who had been Minister of foreign affairs, and who, although a Minister, was nevertheless an honest and a well intentioned man.

[10] Congratulate M. and Mme. Hesse on my behalf; the stock of such a worthy couple could not increase too soon or too much: I was looking forward to the pleasure of seeing them again during the visit I wanted to pay you; I would also have had the pleasure of making M. Gessner's acquaintance and of talking a little with him about the kind offer you extended to me on his behalf. When will come the happy time when I will be able to embrace you, and to find myself in the midst of your worthy compatriots? In the meantime, I am to my last breath, yours faithfully.

JJR

LETTER TO MIRABEAU

Trye, 26 July 1767

[1] I should have written you, Sir, upon receiving your latest note, but I preferred to postpone a few days longer making up for my negligence so that I might speak to you at the same time about the book you sent me. Since I could not read it in its entirety, I chose the chapters in which the Author speaks his mind bluntly and which seemed to me to be the most important ones. Reading them satisfied me less than I expected; and I feel that the vestiges of my old ideas, grown calloused in my brain, no longer allow such novel ideas to make strong impressions on it. I have never been able to understand just what the evidence is on which legal despotism is supposed to

be based; and nothing seemed to me less evident than the chapter devoted to all this evidence. This rather resembles the system of the Abbé de Saint-Pierre who claimed that human reason was forever perfecting itself, since every century adds its lights to those of the preceding centuries. He did not realize that the scope of human understanding is always one and the same, and very narrow, that it loses at one end as much as it gains at the other, and that ever recurring prejudices deprive us of as much enlightenment as cultivated reason might replace. It seems to me that the evidence can be in the natural and political laws only when they are considered by abstraction. In any particular government, which is a composite of so many diverse elements, this evidence necessarily disappears. For the science of government is nothing but a science of combinations, applications and exceptions, according to times, places, circumstances. The public will never be able to perceive with evidence the relations and the interplay of all this. And what, pray, will happen? what will happen to all your sacred rights of property in times of great danger, in extraordinary disasters when your available assets no longer suffice, and the [maxim] "Let the salvation of the people be the supreme law" will be pronounced by the despot?

[2] But let us assume this whole theory of natural laws to be always perfectly evident, even in its applications, and of a clarity that adjusts to all eyes. How can philosophers who know the human heart grant so much authority over men's actions to this evidence, as if they did not know that one very rarely acts by one's lights, and very frequently by one's passions? One proves that the despot's most genuine interest is to govern legally; this has been recognized at all times: but who conducts himself according to his truest interests? only the wise man, if he exists. So that, Gentlemen, you are turning your despots into so many wise men. Almost all men know their true interests, and do not follow them any the better for all that. The prodigal who eats his capital knows perfectly well that he is ruining himself, and nevertheless keeps on going ahead; what is the use of reason's enlightening us, when passion leads us?

I see the better and approve it
but follow the worse.

[3] This is what your despot, ambitious, prodigal, miserly, amorous, vindictive, jealous, weak, will do; for this is what they all do, and

what we all do. Gentlemen, allow me to say it to you; you attribute too much force to your calculations, and not enough to the inclinations of the human heart and the play of the passions. Your system is very good for the people of Utopia, it is worthless for the children of Adam.

[4] Here, according to my old ideas, is the great problem of Politics, which I compare to that of squaring the circle in Geometry, and of longitudes in Astronomy: *To find a form of Government that might place the law above man.*

[5] If this form can be found, let us look for it and try to establish it. You claim, Gentlemen, to find this dominant law in other people's evidence. You prove too much: for this evidence had to be in all Governments, or it will never be in a single one of them.

[6] If unfortunately this form cannot be found, and I frankly admit that I believe that it cannot be, then I am of the opinion that one has to go to the other extreme and all at once place man as much above the law as he can be, consequently to establish a despotism that is arbitrary and indeed the most arbitrary possible: I would wish the despot could be God. In a word, I see no tolerable mean between the most austere Democracy and the most perfect Hobbesism: for the conflict between men and the laws, which makes for a perpetual intestine war in the State, is the worst of all political States.

[7] But the Caligulas, the Neros, the Tiberiuses! . . . My God! . . . I writhe on the ground, and bewail being a human being.

[8] I did not understand everything you said about laws in your book, and what the new Author says about them in his. I find that he deals somewhat lightly with the different forms of Government, rather lightly above all with voting procedures. What he said about the vices of elective despotism is most true: these vices are terrible. Those of hereditary despotism, about which he said nothing, are even more so.

[9] Here is another problem that has been on my mind for a long time:

[10] *To find in arbitrary despotism a form of succession that is neither elective nor hereditary, or rather which is both at once, and by which one makes sure, as much as it is possible to do so, to have neither Tiberiuses nor Neros.*

[11] If ever I have the misfortune of dealing with this mad idea again, I will blame you for the rest of my life for getting me away from my fodder rack. I hope it will not happen; but whatever happens, Sir, do not ever again speak to me about your *legal despotism*. I could not appreciate or even understand it; and I see in it nothing but two contradictory words, which together signify nothing to me.

[12] I am all the more puzzled by your principle of population as it seems to me inexplicable in itself, in contradiction with the facts, impossible to reconcile with the origin of nations. According to you, Sir, population growth should only have begun when it really ceased. On my long held ideas, as soon as there was a penny's worth of what you call riches or disposable value, as soon as the first exchange took place, population growth must have ceased; and that is what did happen.

[13] Your economic system is admirable. Nothing is more profound, more true, more perceptive, more useful. It is full of great and sublime truths which transport one. It covers everything; the field is vast; but I am afraid that it will lead to countries quite different from those toward which you claim to go.

[14] I wanted to pay you obeisance by showing you that I had at least perused you. Now, illustrious friend of men and mine, I prostrate myself at your feet to implore you to take pity on my state and my misfortunes, to leave my dying head in peace, to refrain from awakening in it ideas that are almost extinct and can arise again only to plunge me into new abysses of suffering. Love me always; but do not send me any more books; do not again ask me to read any; do not even attempt to enlighten me if I stray; this is no longer the time for it. One does not become a sincere convert at my age. I may err, and you may convince me, but you cannot persuade me. Besides, I never engage in disputes; I prefer to yield and remain silent: accept my adhering to this resolve. I embrace you with the most tender friendship and most true respect.

the Polish Senate would make for an effect no less pleasing to my taste.

[12] The enormous disparity of fortune which separates the high and the lower nobility is a major obstacle to the reforms required to make love of fatherland the dominant passion. As long as luxury reigns among the Great, cupidity will reign in all hearts. The object of public admiration will invariably be the object of the wishes of individuals, and if one has to be rich in order to shine then being rich will always be the dominant passion. This is a major means of corruption which has to be weakened as much as [965] possible. If other attractive objects, if signs of rank were the distinctions of men in high places, then those who are only rich would be deprived of them, and secret wishes would naturally take the road leading to these honorable distinctions, that is to say to distinctions of merit and of virtue, if that were the only road to success. The Consuls of Rome were often very poor, but they had their lictors, the people of Rome coveted the trappings of these lictors, and plebeians attained the Consulship.

[13] Eliminating all luxury where inequality reigns does, I admit, strike me as an extremely difficult undertaking. But might there not be some way to change the objects of this luxury, and so render its example less pernicious? For example, formerly impoverished Polish nobles attached themselves to the Great who provided them with education and subsistence as their retainers. There you have a truly grand and noble luxury, to the inconvenience of which I am fully sensible, but which at least elevates souls instead of debasing them, gives them sentiments, resilience, and which was not abused among the Romans as long as the Republic endured. I have read that the Duc d'Epergnon, on meeting the Duc de Sulli one day, wanted to pick a quarrel with him; but that since he had only six hundred gentlemen in his retinue, he did not dare attack Sulli, who had eight hundred. I doubt that this kind of luxury leaves much room for a luxury of tinsel; and at least it does not set an example that will seduce the poor. If you get the Great of Poland to go back to indulging no other kind of luxury, it may lead to divisions, factions, quarrels, but it will not corrupt the nation. Next in order, let us tolerate military luxury, the luxury of weapons and horses, but let all effeminate finery be held in contempt, and if women cannot

be made to give it up, let them at least be taught to disapprove and disdain it in men.

[14] Besides, luxury does not get rooted out with sumptuary laws. It has to be extirpated from the depth of men's hearts by impressing healthier and nobler tastes on them. Prohibiting the things people ought not to do is a clumsy and vain thing to do unless one begins by making these things hated and scorned, and the law's disapproval is only effective when it confirms one's own judgment. Whoever goes about instituting a people has to be able to rule men's opinions and through them to go[066]vern their passions. This is true above all regarding the issue about which I am speaking. Sumptuary laws, by restraining desire, stimulate it instead of extinguishing it with punishment. Simplicity of morals and of attire is less the fruit of law than of education.

[4] EDUCATION

[1] This is the important subject. It is education that must give souls the national form, and so direct their tastes and opinions that they will be patriotic by inclination, passion, necessity. Upon opening its eyes, a child should see the fatherland, and see only it until his dying day. Every true republican drank love of fatherland, that is to say love of the laws and of freedom, with his mother's milk. This love makes up his whole existence; he sees only his fatherland, he lives only for it; when he is alone, he is nothing: when he no longer has a fatherland, he no longer is, and if he is not dead, he is worse than dead.

[2] National education is suitable only for free men; only they enjoy a common existence and are truly bound together by Law. A Frenchman, an Englishman, a Spaniard, an Italian, a Russian, are all more or less the same man: they all leave school already molded for a higher degree, that is to say for servitude. At twenty a Pole should not be just another man; he should be a Pole. I want that on learning to read, he read about his country, that at ten he know all of its products, at twelve all of its provinces, roads, towns, that at fifteen he know its entire history, at sixteen all of its laws, that in all of Poland there not be a single great deed or illustrious person of which his memory and heart are not full, and of which

he could not then and there give an account. It should be clear from this that I would not want to have children pursue the usual course of studies under the direction of foreigners and priests. The law should regulate the matter, the order and the form of their studies. They should have only Poles for teachers, [967] all of them married, if possible, all distinguished for their morals, their probity, their good sense, their lights, and all destined, when after a number of years they will have fulfilled this employment well, for employment that is no more important or honorable, for that is impossible, but less strenuous and more resplendent. Above all beware of turning the state of being a teacher into a profession. A public person in Poland ought to have no other permanent state than that of Citizen. Each position he fills, and above all a position as important as this one, should be regarded as nothing but a testing ground and a stage from which to rise still higher once he merits it. I urge the Poles to heed this maxim, which I shall stress often: I believe it to be the key to one of the mainsprings of the State. The reader will see below how, in my opinion, it can be made to work without exception.

[3] I do not at all like the distinctions between schools and academies which result in the rich nobility being educated differently and separately from the poor nobility. Since all are equal by the constitution of the State, all ought to be educated together and in the same fashion, and if it is impossible to establish a completely free public education, it must at least be set at a cost the poor can afford. Would it not be possible to set up in each school a certain number of entirely free places, that is to say at the State's expense, and which in France are called scholarships? These places, awarded to the children of the poor gentry who have deserved well of the fatherland, not as an act of charity, but as a reward for the fathers' valuable services, would, on this basis, become places of honor, and could produce a twofold benefit which would not be negligible. To this end, appointments to these places would have to be not arbitrary, but made by a kind of judgment about which I shall speak below. Those filling these places would be called children of the State, and distinguished by some badge of honor that would give them precedence over other children of their age including even the children of the Great.

[4] In every School a gymnasium or place for physical exercise should be established for the children. This much neglected issue is, in my view, the most important part of education, not only because it forms sturdy and healthy temperaments [968], but even more because of its moral objective, which either gets neglected or is met only by a lot of pedantic and vain precepts that are so much empty talk. I cannot repeat often enough that good education has to be negative. Prevent vices from arising, you will have done enough for virtue. The way to do this in a good public education is simplicity itself. It consists in keeping children always alert, not by boring studies of which they understand nothing and which they come to hate simply because they are forced to stay put; but by exercises they like, because they satisfy their growing bodies' need for movement, and which they will find enjoyable in other ways as well.

[5] They should not be allowed to play by themselves as they please, but all together and in public, so that there is always a common goal to which all aspire and which excites competition and emulation. Parents who prefer domestic education, and have their children brought up under their own supervision, must nevertheless send them to these exercises. Their instruction may be domestic and individual, but their games ought always to be public and common to all; for the point here is not only to keep them busy, to give them a robust constitution, to make them agile and limber, but to accustom them from early on to rule, to equality, to fraternity, to competitions, to living under the eyes of their fellow-citizens and to seeking public approbation. To this end, the winners' prizes and rewards should be distributed not arbitrarily by the coaches or school principals, but by acclamation and the judgment of the spectators; and these judgments can be trusted always to be just especially if care is taken to make these games attractive to the public by organizing them with some pomp and so that they become a spectacle. In which case it is a fair assumption that all honest folk and good patriots will regard it a duty and a pleasure to attend them.

[6] In Berne, they have a rather unusual exercise for young Patricians graduating from school. It is called the *moot State* [*l'État extérieur*]. It is a copy on a small scale of everything that makes

up the government of the Republic: a Senate, Chief Magistrates, Counselors, Officers, Bailiffs, Advocates, lawsuits, judgments, solemnities. [969] The moot State even has a small government and some revenues, and this institution, authorized and protected by the sovereign, is the nursery of the Statesmen who will one day direct public affairs in the same capacity which they first exercise only in play.

[7] Regardless of the form given to public education, about which I do not here enter into detail, it is important to establish a College of Magistrates of the first rank charged with its supreme administration, and which appoints, dismisses and transfers at will not only the Principals and heads of schools who, as I have already said, will themselves be candidates for the higher magistracies, but also the coaches whose zeal and alertness will also have to be aroused by higher positions which will be open or closed to them depending on how they will have filled their present positions. Since it is on these institutions that the hope of the Republic, the glory and fate of the nation depend, I must admit that I attach to them an importance I am rather surprised it has not occurred to anyone anywhere else to attribute to them. I am distressed for the sake of humanity that so many ideas which seem to me good and useful are, although eminently practical, always so wide of what is done.

[8] Besides, I do no more than to point the way here; but that is enough for those I am addressing. These inadequately developed ideas show from afar the paths unknown to the moderns by which the ancients led men to that vigor of soul, to that patriotic zeal, to that esteem for the truly personal qualities and without regard for merely external trappings which are without example among us, but the leaven for which is in all men's hearts ready to ferment just as soon as it is activated by suitable institutions. Direct the Poles' education, practices, customs, morals in this spirit, you will develop in them the share of this leaven which has not yet been dissipated by corrupt maxims, outworn institutions, an egoistical philosophy whose preaching is deadly. The nation will date its second birth from the terrible crisis from which it is emerging and when it sees what its as yet undisciplined members accomplished, it will expect much and obtain even more from a carefully considered institution; it will cherish, [970] it will respect laws which flatter its noble pride, which will make and keep it happy and free; extirpating from its

breast the passions that elude the laws, it will foster those that cause them to be loved; finally, renewing itself so to speak by itself, it will resume at this new stage of its life all the vigor of a nascent nation. But without these precautions expect nothing from your laws. However wise they may be, however much they may anticipate, they will be eluded and remain vain, and you will have corrected some abuses that wound you, while introducing others you will not have anticipated. So much for the preliminaries I thought indispensable. Let us now look at the constitution.

[5] THE RADICAL VICE



[1] Let us avoid, if possible, rushing from the very outset into chimerical projects. What, Gentlemen, is the enterprise you are about just now? Reforming the Government of Poland, that is to say, giving to the constitution of a large kingdom the solidity and vigor of that of a small Republic. Before working on the execution of this project, one should first inquire whether it can succeed. Greatness of Nations! Size of States! the first and principal source of the miseries of humankind, and above all of the countless calamities that sap and destroy politically organized peoples. Almost all small States, republics as well as monarchies, prosper simply because they are small, because all their citizens know and watch one another, because the chiefs can see for themselves the evil being done, the good they have to do; and because their orders are carried out within their sight. All great peoples crushed by their own mass groan either in anarchy as do you, or under subordinate oppressors which a necessary devolution forces Kings to set over them. Only God can govern the world, and it would take more than human faculties to govern [971] great nations. It is astonishing, it is wondrous that the vast expanse of Poland has not already a hundred times converted its government into a despotism, bastardized the Poles' souls, and corrupted the mass of the nation. The case is unique in history of such a State being, after many centuries, still only at [the stage of] anarchy. This progression has been so slow because of advantages inseparable from the inconveniences of which you wish to get rid. Ah! I cannot repeat it too often; think carefully before you lay hands on your laws, and above all on those that made

[OC III, 608]

THE STATE OF WAR

[1] I open the books on right and on ethics, I listen to the scholars and jurisconsults and, moved by their ingratiating discourses [609], I deplore the miseries of nature, I admire the peace and justice established by the civil order, I bless the wisdom of public institutions, and console myself for being a man by seeing that I am a citizen. Fully instructed about my duties and happiness, I close the book, leave the class-room, and look around me; I see unfortunate peoples groaning under an iron yoke, mankind crushed by a handful of oppressors, starving masses overwhelmed by pain and hunger, whose blood and tears the rich drink in peace, and everywhere the strong armed against the weak with the frightful power of the laws.

[2] All this happens peacefully and without resistance; it is the tranquility of the companions of Ulysses shut up in the Cyclops' cave until they get devoured. All one can do is to groan and not say anything. Let us draw an eternal veil over these objects of horror. I raise my eyes and look afar. I see fires and flames, countrysides deserted, towns sacked. Fierce men, where are you dragging these wretches? I hear a frightful noise; what confusion! what cries! I draw near; I see a scene of murders, ten thousand men slaughtered, the dead piled up in heaps, the dying trampled underfoot by horses, everywhere the image of death and dying. So this is the fruit of these peaceful institutions! Pity, indignation swell up in the depths of my heart. Ah barbarous philosopher! read us your book on a battlefield!

[3] What human bowels would not be moved by these sad objects? but being human and pleading the cause of humanity is no longer permitted. Justice and trust have to be bent to the interest of the most powerful: such is the rule. The People grants neither pensions, nor positions, nor [University] chairs, nor memberships in Academies; why should it be protected? Magnanimous princes, I speak in the name of the literary establishment; oppress the people with a clear conscience; we expect everything from you alone; the people is no good to us.

[4] How can so weak a voice make itself heard above such a self-serving din? Alas! I may not say anything; but could not my heart's voice break through this sad silence? No; without entering into repulsive details which would be mistaken for a satire just

because they are true, I shall confine myself, as I always have done, [610] to examining human institutions in terms of their principles, to correcting, if possible, the false ideas about them which self-interested authors give us; and at least to seeing to it that injustice and violence not shamelessly assume the name of right and equity.

[5] When I consider the situation of mankind, the first thing I notice is a manifest contradiction in its constitution, which makes it forever unstable. Man to man we live in the civil state and subject to laws; people to people, each enjoys natural freedom: which at bottom makes our situation worse than if these distinctions were unknown. For by living both in the social order and in the state of nature, we are subject to the inconveniences of both without finding security in either. It is true that the perfection of the social order consists in the union of force and law; but for this to be so, law must guide force; whereas according to the ideas of princes about their absolute independence, force alone, speaking to citizens in the guise of law and to foreigners in the guise of reason of state, deprives the latter of the power and the former of the will to resist, so that everywhere the vain name of justice only serves as a shield for violence.

[6] As for what is commonly called the right of nations, it is certain that, for want of sanction, its laws are nothing but chimeras even weaker than the law of nature. This latter at least speaks to the heart of individuals, whereas the right of nations, having no other guarantee than its utility to the one who submits to it, its decisions are respected only as long as self-interest confirms them. In the mixed condition in which we find ourselves, regardless of which one of the two systems one favors, by doing either too much or too little we have done nothing, and we have placed ourselves in the worst state possible. This, it seems to me, is the genuine origin of public calamities.

[7] Let us briefly contrast these ideas with the horrible system of Hobbes; and we will find that, altogether contrary to his absurd doctrine, the state of war, far from being natural to man, is born of peace, or at least of the precautions men have taken to secure a lasting peace. But before entering into this discussion, let us try to explain what it . . .

[611] [8] (Who could have imagined without shuddering the mad system of natural war of each against all? What a strange animal it must be that would believe its good to depend on the destruction

of its entire species! and how can one conceive that this species, so monstrous and so detestable, could last even two generations? Yet this is how far the desire or rather the fury to establish despotism and passive obedience has led one of the finest geniuses that ever lived. So ferocious a principle was worthy of its purpose.

[9] The state of society which constrains all our natural inclinations can, however, not annihilate them; in spite of our prejudices and in spite of ourselves they continue to speak to us in the depths of our heart and often bring us back to the true which we abandon for the sake of chimeras. If this mutual and destructive enmity were part and parcel of our constitution, it would therefore continue to make itself felt and set us against one another in spite of ourselves, past all social chains. The dreadful hatred of humanity would gnaw at man's heart. The birth of his own children would distress him; he would rejoice at the death of his brothers; and upon finding someone asleep, his first movement would be to kill him.

[10] The benevolence that makes us participate in the happiness of our fellows, the compassion that identifies us with the one who suffers and distresses us at his pain, would be sentiments unknown and directly contrary to nature. A sensitive and pitying human being would be a monster; and we would be naturally what we have considerable difficulty becoming amidst the depravation that pursues us.

[11] In vain would the sophist say that this mutual enmity is not innate and immediate, but based on the competition that inevitably follows from everyone's right to all. For the sentiment of this supposed right is no more natural to man than the war which he has arise from it.)

[12] I have said before and I cannot repeat too often that the error of Hobbes and of the philosophers is to confuse natural man with the men they have before their eyes, and to move into one system a being that can thrive only in another. Man wants his well-being and everything that can contribute to it, that is incontrovertible. But naturally this well-being of man is limited to the physically necessary; [612] for when his soul is healthy and his body does not suffer, what is lacking for him to be happy conformably to his constitution? He who has nothing desires little; he who commands no one has little ambition. But superfluity arouses greed; the more one gets, the more one desires. He who has much wants to have all;

and the madness for universal monarchy never tormented any but a great king's heart. Such is the march of nature, such is the development of the passions. A superficial philosopher observes souls kneaded and risen a thousand times over in the leaven of society and believes he has observed man. But in order to know him well, one has to know how to disentangle the natural gradation of his sentiments, and it is not among people who live in large cities that one should look for the first feature of nature imprinted on the human heart.

[13] Thus this analytical method only leads to abysses and mysteries, where the wisest understands the least. Ask why morals are corrupted in proportion as minds are enlightened; unable to discover the cause, they will have the audacity to deny the fact. Ask why the savages transplanted among us share neither our passions nor our pleasures, and do not care for what we so fervently desire. They will never succeed in explaining it, or they will only explain it on my principles. They only know what they see, and they have never seen nature. They know well enough what a Londoner or a Parisian is; but they will never know what a man is.

[601] [14] But even if it were true that this unbounded and uncontrollable greed were as developed in all men as our Sophist assumes, it would still not bring about the universal state of war of each against all of which Hobbes dares to sketch the odious image. This unbridled desire to appropriate everything is incompatible with that of destroying all of one's fellows; and the victor who, having killed everyone, had the misfortune to remain alone in the world, would enjoy nothing in it precisely because he would have everything. What good are even riches if not to be spent; of what use would the possession of the entire universe be to him if he were its sole inhabitant? What? Will his stomach devour all of the earth's fruit? Who will gather for him the produce from the four corners of the earth; who will carry the evidence of his empire to the vast wastes he will never inhabit? What will he do with his treasures, who will consume his provisions, before whose eyes will he display his power? I understand. Instead of massacring them all, he will put them all in chains, in order at least to have Slaves. This immediately changes the state of the question; and since it is no longer a question of destroying, the state of war is abolished. Let the reader suspend judgment for the present. I will not fail to come back to this point.

[15] Man is naturally peaceable and timorous, at the slightest danger his first movement is to flee; he becomes warlike only by dint of habit and experience. Honor, interest, prejudices, vengeance, all the passions that might make him brave perils and death, are far from him in the state of nature. It is only after he has entered into society with another human being that he decides to attack someone else; and he becomes a soldier [602] only after having been a citizen. That does not evince strong inclinations to war with all of one's fellows. But I am devoting too much time to a system as revolting as it is absurd, that has already been refuted a hundred times.

[16] There is, then, no general war between man and man; and the human species was not formed solely to destroy itself. It remains to consider the accidental and particular war that can arise between two or more individuals.

[17] If natural law were inscribed only in human reason, it would have little capacity to guide most of our actions, but it is also engraved in the human heart in indelible characters, and it is from the heart that it speaks to him more forcefully than do all the precepts of the Philosophers; it is from the heart that it cries out to him that he is not allowed to sacrifice the life of his fellow except to preserve his own, and causes him to feel horror at spilling human blood not in anger, even when he finds himself obliged to do so.

[18] It is conceivable that in the quarrels without [common] judges that may arise in the state of nature, an irritated man might sometimes kill another, openly or surreptitiously. But if this were genuine war, imagine the strange position this same man would have to be in if he could preserve his own life only at the expense of someone else's, and if by virtue of some relation established between them one had to die so that the other might live. War is a permanent state which presupposes lasting relations, and such relations rarely obtain between man and man, where everything between one individual and another is in continual flux which constantly changes relations and interests. So that the subject of a dispute arises and disappears almost instantaneously, a quarrel begins and ends in a single day, and there may be fights and murders, but never or very rarely extended enmities and wars.

[19] In the civil state, where the life of all citizens is within the power of the sovereign and no one has the right to dispose of his

own or of another's life, the state of war can also not obtain among individuals; and as for Duels, challenges, cartels, calls to single combat, quite aside from the fact that they were illegitimate and barbarous excesses of an entirely military constitution, they led not to a genuine state of war, but to a private affair that was so clearly settled in [603] a finite time and place that a second bout required a renewed call [to combat]. The one exception to this are the private wars suspended by daily truces that were called peace of God and sanctioned by Saint Louis's institutions. But this is a case unique in history.

[20] One might raise the further question whether Kings who are *de facto* independent of human power could engage with one another in particular and personal wars independent of those of the state. The question is surely an idle one, for as everyone knows, Princes are not in the habit of sparing others in order to face danger themselves. Moreover, this question is dependent upon another question which I am not the one to settle: to wit whether or not the Prince is himself subject to the laws of the state; for if he is subject to them, his person is tied to the state and his life belongs to it like that of the least citizen. But if the Prince is above the laws, he lives in the pure state of nature and owes neither his subjects nor anyone [else] an account of any of his actions.

Of the Social State

[21] We now enter a new order of things. We shall see men united by an artificial concord, assemble to slaughter one another, and all the horrors of war arise from the efforts made to prevent them. But it is important to begin by forming more exact notions about the essence of the body politic than has been done so far. Let the reader only keep in mind that what is at issue here is not so much history and facts as right and justice, and that I examine things in terms of their nature rather than of our prejudices.

[22] With the first society formed, the formation of all the others necessarily follows. One must either belong to it or unite to resist it. One must either imitate it or let oneself be swallowed by it.

[23] Thus the whole face of the earth is changed; everywhere nature has disappeared; everywhere human art has taken its place[;] independence and natural liberty have given way to laws and