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ROUSSEAU

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*The Social Contract*  
and other later political  
writings

EDITED AND TRANSLATED BY  
VICTOR GOUREVITCH

*Wesleyan University*

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poor. But such ideas must be rejected. If in every nation those to whom the sovereign commits the government of peoples were by their very station the peoples' enemies, it would not be worth the trouble to inquire what they must do to make the people happy.

[OC III, 347]

OF  
THE SOCIAL CONTRACT

OR

PRINCIPLES  
OF POLITICAL RIGHT

BY

JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU  
Citizen of Geneva

– *foederis aequas*  
*Dicamus leges*

Aeneid, xi

*This small treatise is drawn from a larger work, undertaken many years ago without consulting my strength and long since abandoned. Of the various sections that could be extracted from what did get done, this is the most considerable, and the one that has seemed to me the least unworthy of being submitted to the public. The rest no longer exists.*

[1] I want to inquire whether in the civil order there can be some legitimate and sure rule of administration, taking men as they are, and the laws as they can be: In this inquiry I shall try always to combine what right permits with what interest prescribes, so that justice and utility may not be disjoined.

[2] I begin without proving the importance of my subject. I shall be asked whether I am a prince or a lawgiver that I write on Politics? I reply that I am not, and that that is why I write on Politics. If I were a prince or a legislator, I would not waste my time saying what needs doing; I would do it, or keep silent.

[3] Born a citizen of a free State, and a member of the sovereign, the right to vote in it is enough to impose on me the duty to learn about public affairs, regardless of how weak might be the influence of my voice on them. Happy, whenever I meditate about Governments, always to find in my inquiries new reasons for loving that of my country!

#### CHAPTER ONE SUBJECT OF THIS FIRST BOOK

[1] Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains. One believes himself the others' master, and yet is more a slave than they. How did this change come about? I do not know. What can make it legitimate? I believe I can solve this question.

[2] If I considered only force, and the effect that follows from it, [352] I would say; as long as a People is compelled to obey and does obey, it does well; as soon as it can shake off the yoke and does shake it off, it does even better; for in recovering its freedom by the same right as the right by which it was robbed of it, either the people is well founded to take it back, or it was deprived of it without foundation. But the social order is a sacred right, which provides the basis for all the others. Yet this right does not come from nature; it is therefore founded on conventions. The problem is to know what these conventions are. Before coming to that, I must establish what I have just set forth.

CHAPTER TWO  
OF THE FIRST SOCIETIES

[1] The most ancient of all societies and the only natural one is that of the family. Even so children remain bound to the father only as long as they need him for their preservation. As soon as that need ceases, the natural bond dissolves. The children, exempt from the obedience they owe the father, the father exempt from the cares he owed the children, all equally return to independence. If they remain united, they are no longer so naturally but voluntarily, and even the family maintains itself only by convention.

[2] This common freedom is a consequence of man's nature. His first law is to attend to his own preservation, his first cares are those he owes himself, and since, as soon as he has reached the age of reason, he is sole judge of the means proper to preserve himself, he becomes his own master.

[3] The family is, then, if you will, the first model of political societies; the chief is the image of the father, the people are the image of the children, and all, being born equal and free, alienate their freedom only for the sake of their utility. The only difference is that in the family the father's love for his children repays him for the cares he bestows on them, and that in the State the pleasure of commanding takes the place of the chief's lack of love for his peoples.

[4] Grotius denies that all human power is established for [353] the sake of the governed: he gives slavery as an example. His most frequent mode of argument is always to establish right by fact.\* One could use a more consistent method, but not one more favorable to Tyrants.

[5] So that, according to Grotius, it is an open question whether humankind belongs to a hundred men, or whether those hundred men belong to humankind, and throughout his book he appears to incline to the first opinion: that is also Hobbes's sentiment. Here,

\* "Learned investigations of public right are often nothing but the history of ancient abuses, and it was a misplaced single-mindedness to have taken the trouble to study them too closely." *Ms Treatise on the Interests of France in Relation to Her Neighbors*; by M. L[e] M[arquis] d'A[rgenson]. This is precisely what Grotius did.

then, is humankind, divided into herds of cattle, each with its chief who tends it to devour it.

[6] As a shepherd is of a nature superior to his flock's, so too are the shepherds of men, who are their chiefs, of a nature superior to their peoples'. This is how, according to Philo, the Emperor Caligula reasoned; concluding rather well from this analogy that kings were Gods, or that peoples were beasts.

[7] Caligula's reasoning amounts to that of Hobbes and of Grotius. Aristotle before all of them had also said that men are not naturally equal, but that some were born for slavery and others for domination.

[8] Aristotle was right, but he mistook the effect for the cause. Any man born in slavery is born for slavery, nothing could be more certain. Slaves lose everything in their chains, even the desire to be rid of them; they love their servitude, as the companions of Ulysses loved their brutishness.\* Hence, if there are slaves by nature, it is because there were slaves contrary to nature. Force made the first slaves, their cowardice perpetuated them.

[9] I have said nothing about King Adam, or about emperor Noah, father of three great monarchs who among themselves divided the uni[354]verse, as did the children of Saturn, whom some believed they recognized in them. I hope my moderation will be appreciated; for since I am a direct descendant from one of these Princes, and perhaps from the elder branch, for all I know, I might, upon verification of titles, find I am the legitimate King of humankind. Be that as it may, it cannot be denied that Adam was Sovereign of the world as Robinson was of his island, as long as he was its sole inhabitant; and what made this empire convenient was that the monarch, secure on his throne, had neither rebellions, nor wars, nor conspirators to fear.

CHAPTER THREE  
THE RIGHT OF THE STRONGER

[1] The stronger is never strong enough to be forever master, unless he transforms his force into right, and obedience into duty. Hence

\* See a small treatise by Plutarch entitled: *That Beasts Use Reason*.

believed  
humankind  
is dominate  
by "chiefs"  
↑  
calling  
upon  
other  
scholars

the right of the stronger; a right which is apparently understood ironically, and in principle really established: But will no one ever explain this word to us? Force is a physical power; I fail to see what morality can result from its effects. To yield to force is an act of necessity, not of will; at most it is an act of prudence. In what sense can it become a duty?

[2] Let us assume this alleged right for a moment. I say that it can only result in an unintelligible muddle. For once force makes right, the effect changes together with the cause; every force that overcomes the first, inherits its right. Once one can disobey with impunity, one can do so legitimately, and since the stronger is always right, one need only make sure to be the stronger. But what is a right that perishes when force ceases? If one has to obey by force, one need not obey by duty, and if one is no longer forced to obey, one is no longer obliged to do so. Clearly, then, this word "right" adds nothing to force; it means nothing at all here.

[3] Obey the powers that be. If this means yield to force, the precept is good but superfluous, I warrant that it [355] will never be violated. All power comes from God, I admit it; but so does all illness. Does this mean it is forbidden to call the doctor? A brigand takes me by surprise at the edge of a woods: am I not only forced to hand over my purse, but also obliged in conscience to hand it over even if I could withhold it? For the pistol he holds is, after all, also a power.

[4] Let us agree, then, that force does not make right, and that one is only obliged to obey legitimate powers. Thus my original question keeps coming back.

force  
F  
legitimate  
power / right  
what is  
right thought

CHAPTER FOUR  
OF SLAVERY

[1] Since no man has a natural authority over his fellow-man, and since force produces no right, conventions remain as the basis of all legitimate authority among men.

[2] If, says Grotius, an individual can alienate his freedom, and enslave himself to a master, why could not a whole people alienate its freedom and subject itself to a king? There are quite a few ambiguous words here which call for explanation, but let us confine

ourselves to the word *alienate*. To alienate is to give or to sell. Now, a man who enslaves himself to another does not give himself, he sells himself, at the very least for his subsistence: but a people, what does it sell itself for? A king, far from furnishing his subjects' subsistence, takes his own entirely from them, and according to Rabelais a king does not live modestly. Do the subjects then give their persons on condition that their goods will be taken as well? I do not see what they have left to preserve.

[3] The despot, it will be said, guarantees civil tranquility for his subjects. All right; but what does it profit them if the wars his ambition brings on them, if his insatiable greed, the harassment by his administration cause them more distress than their own dissension would have done? What does it profit them if this very tranquility is one of their miseries? Life is also tranquil in dungeons; is that enough to feel well in them? The Greeks imprisoned in the Cyclops's cave lived there [356] tranquilly, while awaiting their turn to be devoured.

[4] To say a man gives himself gratuitously is to say something absurd and inconceivable; such an act is illegitimate and null, for the simple reason that whoever does so is not in his right mind. To say the same of a whole people is to assume a people of madmen; madness does not make right.

[5] Even if everyone could alienate himself, he could not alienate his children; they are born men and free; their freedom belongs to them, no one but they themselves has the right to dispose of it. Before they have reached the age of reason, their father may in their name stipulate conditions for their preservation, for their well-being; but he cannot give them away irrevocably and unconditionally; for such a gift is contrary to the ends of nature and exceeds the rights of paternity. Hence, for an arbitrary government to be legitimate, the people would, in each generation, have to be master of accepting or rejecting it, but in that case the government would no longer be arbitrary.

[6] To renounce one's freedom is to renounce one's quality as man, the rights of humanity, and even its duties. There can be no possible compensation for someone who renounces everything. Such a renunciation is incompatible with the nature of man, and to deprive one's will of all freedom is to deprive one's actions of all morality. Finally, a convention that stipulates absolute authority

on one side, and unlimited obedience on the other, is vain and contradictory. Is it not clear that one is under no obligation toward a person from whom one has the right to demand everything, and does not this condition alone, without equivalent and without exchange, nullify the act? For what right can my slave have against me, since everything he has belongs to me, and his right being mine, this right of mine against myself is an utterly meaningless expression?

[7] Grotius and the rest derive from war another origin of the alleged right of slavery. Since, according to them, the victor has the right to kill the vanquished, the latter can buy back his life at the cost of his freedom; a convention they regard as all the more legitimate because it proves profitable to both parties. But it is clear that this alleged right to kill the vanquished in no way results from the state of war. Men are not naturally enemies, if only because when they live in their primitive independence [357] the relation among them is not sufficiently stable to constitute either a state of peace or a state of war. It is the relation between things and not between men that constitutes war, and since the state of war cannot arise from simple personal relations but only from property relations, private war or war between one man and another can exist neither in the state of nature, where there is no stable property, nor in the social state, where everything is under the authority of the laws.

men fight  
b/c of  
property  
injuries  
↓  
for  
"things"

[8] Individual fights, duels, skirmishes, are acts that do not constitute a state; and as for the private wars authorized by the ordinances of King Louis IX of France and suspended by the peace of God, they are abuses of feudal government, an absurd system if ever there was one, contrary both to the principles of natural right and to all good polity.

[9] War is then not a relationship between one man and another, but a relationship between one State and another, in which individuals are enemies only by accident, not as men, nor even as citizens,\*

\* The Romans who understood and respected the right of war better than any nation in the world were so scrupulous in this regard that a citizen was not allowed to serve as a volunteer without having enlisted specifically against the enemy, and one designated as such by name. When a Legion in which the Younger Cato fought his first campaign under Popilius was reorganized, the Elder Cato wrote to Popilius that if he was willing to have his son continue to serve under him, he would have to have him take a new military oath because, the first oath having

but as soldiers; not as members of the fatherland, but as its defenders. Finally, any State can only have other States, and not men, as enemies, inasmuch as it is impossible to fix a true relation between things of different natures.

[10] This principle even conforms to the established maxims of all ages and to the constant practice of all civilized peoples. Declarations of war are warnings not so much to the powers as to their subjects. The foreigner, whether he be a king, a private individual, or a people, who robs, kills, or detains subjects without declaring war on their prince, is not an enemy, he is a brigand. Even in the midst of war, a just prince may well seize everything in enemy territory that belongs to the public, but he respects the person and the goods of private individuals; he respects rights on which his own are founded. Since the aim of war is the destruction of the enemy State, one has the right to kill its defenders as long as they bear arms; but as soon as they lay down their arms and surrender they cease to be enemies or the enemy's instruments, and become simply men once more, and one no longer has a right over their life. It is sometimes possible to kill the State without killing a single one of its members: and [358] war confers no right that is not necessary to its end. These principles are not those of Grotius; they are not founded on the authority of poets, but follow from the nature of things, and are founded on reason.

Killing  
for no  
end  
is not  
justifiable

[11] As regards the right of conquest, it has no other foundation than the law of the stronger. If war does not give the victor the right to massacre vanquished peoples, then this right which he does not have cannot be the foundation of the right to enslave them. One has the right to kill the enemy only when one cannot make him a slave. Hence the right to make him a slave does not derive from the right to kill him: it is therefore an iniquitous exchange to make him buy his life, over which one has no right whatsoever, at the cost of his freedom. Is it not clear that by establishing the right of life and death by the right of slavery, and the right of slavery by the right of life and death, one falls into a vicious circle?

slave  
to  
buy  
freedom  
back

been vacated, he could no longer bear arms against the enemy. And the same Cato wrote to his son to be careful not to appear in battle without having taken this new oath. I know that the siege of Clusium and other individual facts can be urged against me, but I cite laws, practices. The Romans are the people who least frequently transgressed their laws, and they are the only ones to have had such fine ones. [1782 edn.]

[12] Even assuming this terrible right to kill all, I say that a slave made in war or a conquered people is not bound to anything at all toward their master, except to obey him as long as they are forced to do so. In taking an equivalent of his life, the victor did not spare it: instead of killing him unprofitably, he killed him usefully. So far, then, is he from having acquired over him any authority associated with his force, that they continue in a state of war as before; their relation itself is its effect, and the exercise of the right of war presupposes the absence of a peace treaty. They have made a convention; very well: but that convention, far from destroying the state of war, presupposes its continuation.

[13] Thus, from whatever angle one looks at things, the right to slavery is null, not only because it is illegitimate, but because it is absurd and meaningless. These words *slavery* and *right* are contradictory; they are mutually exclusive. Either between one man and another, or between a man and a people, the following speech will always be equally absurd. *I make a convention with you which is entirely at your expense and entirely to my profit, which I shall observe as long as I please, and which you shall observe as long as I please.*

[359]

CHAPTER FIVE  
THAT ONE ALWAYS HAS TO GO BACK TO A FIRST  
CONVENTION

[1] Even if I were to grant everything I have thus far refuted, the abettors of despotism would be no better off. There will always be a great difference between subjugating a multitude and ruling a society. When scattered men, regardless of their number, are successively enslaved to a single man, I see in this nothing but a master and slaves, I do not see in it a people and its chief; it is, if you will, an aggregation, but not an association; there is here neither public good, nor body politic. That man, even if he had enslaved half the world, still remains nothing but a private individual; his interest, separate from that of the others, still remains nothing but a private interest. When this same man dies, his empire is left behind scattered and without a bond, like an oak dissolves and collapses into a heap of ashes on being consumed by fire.

[2] A people, says Grotius, can give itself to a king. So that according to Grotius a people is a people before giving itself to a king. That very gift is a civil act, it presupposes a public deliberation. Hence before examining the act by which a people elects a king, it would be well to examine the act by which a people is a people. For this act, being necessarily prior to the other, is the true foundation of society.

[3] Indeed, if there were no prior convention, then, unless the election were unanimous, why would the minority be obliged to submit to the choice of the majority, and why would a hundred who want a master have the right to vote on behalf of ten who do not want one? The law of majority rule is itself something established by convention, and presupposes unanimity at least once.

[360]

CHAPTER SIX  
OF THE SOCIAL PACT

[1] I assume men having reached the point where the obstacles that interfere with their preservation in the state of nature prevail by their resistance over the forces which each individual can muster to maintain himself in that state. Then that primitive state can no longer subsist, and humankind would perish if it did not change its way of being.

[2] Now, since men cannot engender new forces, but only unite and direct those that exist, they are left with no other means of self-preservation than to form, by aggregation, a sum of forces that might prevail over those obstacles' resistance, to set them in motion by a single impetus, and make them act in concert.

[3] This sum of forces can only arise from the cooperation of many: but since each man's force and freedom are his primary instruments of self-preservation, how can he commit them without harming himself, and without neglecting the cares he owes himself? This difficulty, in relation to my subject, can be stated in the following terms.

[4] "To find a form of association that will defend and protect the person and goods of each associate with the full common force, and by means of which each, uniting with all, nevertheless obey



only himself and remain as free as before." This is the fundamental problem to which the social contract provides the solution.

[5] The clauses of this contract are so completely determined by the nature of the act that the slightest modification would render them null and void; so that although they may never have been formally stated, they are everywhere the same, everywhere tacitly admitted and recognized; until, the social compact having been violated, everyone is thereupon restored to his original rights and resumes his natural freedom while losing the conventional freedom for which he renounced it.

[6] These clauses, rightly understood, all come down to just one, namely the total alienation of each associate with all of his rights to the whole community: For, in the first place, since each gives himself entirely, the condition is [361] equal for all, and since the condition is equal for all, no one has any interest in making it burdensome to the rest.

[7] Moreover, since the alienation is made without reservation, the union is as perfect as it can be, and no associate has anything further to claim: For if individuals were left some rights, then, since there would be no common superior who might adjudicate between them and the public, each, being judge in his own case on some issue, would soon claim to be so on all, the state of nature would subsist and the association necessarily become tyrannical or empty.

[8] Finally, each, by giving himself to all, gives himself to no one, and since there is no associate over whom one does not acquire the same right as one grants him over oneself, one gains the equivalent of all one loses, and more force to preserve what one has.

[9] If, then, one sets aside everything that is not of the essence of the social compact, one finds that it can be reduced to the following terms: *Each of us puts his person and his full power in common under the supreme direction of the general will; and in a body we receive each member as an indivisible part of the whole.*

[10] At once, in place of the private person of each contracting party, this act of association produces a moral and collective body made up of as many members as the assembly has voices, and which receives by this same act its unity, its common *self*, its life and its will. The public person thus formed by the union of all the others

alienation  
rights to  
the  
community

formerly assumed the name *City*\* and now assumes [362] that of *Republic* or of *body politic*, which its members call *State* when it is passive, *Sovereign* when active, *Power* when comparing it to similar bodies. As for the associates, they collectively assume the name *people* and individually call themselves *Citizens* as participants in the sovereign authority, and *Subjects* as subjected to the laws of the State. But these terms are often confused and mistaken for one another; it is enough to be able to distinguish them where they are used in their precise sense.

CHAPTER SEVEN  
OF THE SOVEREIGN

[1] This formula shows that the act of association involves a reciprocal engagement between the public and private individuals, and that each individual, by contracting, so to speak, with himself, finds himself engaged in a two-fold relation: namely, as member of the Sovereign toward private individuals, and as a member of the State toward the Sovereign. But here the maxim of civil right, that no one is bound by engagements toward himself, does not apply; for there is a great difference between assuming an obligation toward oneself, and assuming a responsibility toward a whole of which one is a part.

[2] It should also be noted that the public deliberation which can obligate all subjects toward the Sovereign because of the two differ-

\* The true sense of this word is almost entirely effaced among the moderns; most take a city for a *City*, and a bourgeois for a *Citizen*. They do not know that houses make the city but *Citizens* make the *City*. This same error once cost the Carthaginians dear. I have not read that the subjects of any Prince were ever given the title *Cives*, not even the Macedonians in ancient times nor, in our days, the English, although they are closer to freedom than all the others. Only the French assume the name *Citizen* casually, because they have no genuine idea of it, as can be seen in their Dictionaries; otherwise they would be committing the crime of Lese-Majesty in usurping it: for them this name expresses a virtue and not a right. When Bodin wanted to speak of our *Citizens* and *Bourgeois*, he committed a bad blunder in taking the one for the other. M. d'Alembert made no mistake about it, and in his article *Geneva* he correctly distinguished the [362] four orders of men (even five, if simple foreigners are included) there are in our city, and only two of which make up the Republic. No other French author has, to my knowledge, understood the true meaning of the word *Citizen*.

ent relations in terms of which each subject is viewed cannot, for the opposite reason, obligate the Sovereign toward itself, and that it is therefore contrary to the nature of the body politic for the Sovereign to impose on itself a law which it cannot break. Since the Sovereign can consider itself only in terms of one and the same relation, it is then in the same situation as a private individual contracting with himself: which shows that there is not, nor can there be, any kind of fundamental law that is obligatory for the body of the people, not even the social contract. This does not mean [363] that this body cannot perfectly well enter into engagements with others about anything that does not detract from this contract; for with regard to foreigners it becomes a simple being, an individual.

[3] But the body politic or Sovereign, since it owes its being solely to the sanctity of the contract, can never obligate itself, even toward another, to anything that detracts from that original act, such as to alienate any part of itself or to subject itself to another Sovereign. To violate the act by which it exists would be to annihilate itself, and what is nothing produces nothing.

[4] As soon as this multitude is thus united in one body, one cannot injure one of the members without attacking the body, and still less can one injure the body without the members being affected. Thus duty and interest alike obligate the contracting parties to help one another, and the same men must strive to combine in this two-fold relation all the advantages attendant on it.

[5] Now the Sovereign, since it is formed entirely of the individuals who make it up, has not and cannot have any interests contrary to theirs; consequently the Sovereign power has no need of a guarantor toward the subjects, because it is impossible for the body to want to harm all of its members, and we shall see later that it cannot harm any one of them in particular. The Sovereign, by the mere fact that it is, is always everything it ought to be.

[6] But this is not the case regarding the subjects' relations to the Sovereign, and notwithstanding the common interest, the Sovereign would have no guarantee of the subjects' engagements if it did not find means to ensure their fidelity.

[7] Indeed each individual may, as a man, have a particular will contrary to or different from the general will he has as a Citizen. His particular interest may speak to him quite differently from the common interest; his absolute and naturally independent existence

may lead him to look upon what he owes to the common cause as a gratuitous contribution, the loss of which will harm others less than its payment burdens him and, by considering the moral person that constitutes the State as a being of reason because it is not a man, he would enjoy the rights of a citizen without being willing to fulfill the duties of a subject; an injustice, the progress of which would cause the ruin of the body politic.

[364] [8] Hence for the social compact not to be an empty formula, it tacitly includes the following engagement which alone can give force to the rest, that whoever refuses to obey the general will shall be constrained to do so by the entire body: which means nothing other than that he shall be forced to be free; for this is the condition which, by giving each Citizen to the Fatherland, guarantees him against all personal dependence; the condition which is the device and makes for the operation of the political machine, and alone renders legitimate civil engagements which would otherwise be absurd, tyrannical, and liable to the most enormous abuses.

#### CHAPTER EIGHT OF THE CIVIL STATE

\* [1] This transition from the state of nature to the civil state produces a most remarkable change in man by substituting justice for instinct in his conduct, and endowing his actions with the morality they previously lacked. Only then, when the voice of duty succeeds physical impulsion and right succeeds appetite, does man, who until then had looked only to himself, see himself forced to act on other principles, and to consult his reason before listening to his inclinations. Although in this state he deprives himself of several advantages he has from nature, he gains such great advantages in return, his faculties are exercised and developed, his ideas enlarged, his sentiments ennobled, his entire soul is elevated to such an extent, that if the abuses of this new condition did not often degrade him to beneath the condition he has left, he should ceaselessly bless the happy moment which wrested him from it forever, and out of a stupid and bounded animal made an intelligent being and a man.

[2] Let us reduce this entire balance to terms easy to compare. What man loses by the social contract is his natural freedom and

an unlimited right to everything that tempts him and he can reach; what he gains is civil freedom and property in everything he possesses. In order not to be mistaken about these compensations, one has [365] to distinguish clearly between natural freedom which has no other bounds than the individual's forces, and civil freedom which is limited by the general will, and between possession which is merely the effect of force or the right of the first occupant, and property which can only be founded on a positive title.

[3] To the preceding one might add to the credit of the civil state moral freedom, which alone makes man truly the master of himself; for the impulsion of mere appetite is slavery, and obedience to the law one has prescribed to oneself is freedom. But I have already said too much on this topic, and the philosophical meaning of the word *freedom* is not my subject here.

#### CHAPTER NINE OF REAL PROPERTY

[1] Each member of the community gives himself to it at the moment of its formation, such as he then is, he himself with all his forces, of which the goods he possesses are a part. It is not that by this act possession changes in nature by changing hands, and becomes property in the hands of the Sovereign: But just as the City's forces are incomparably greater than a private individual's, so public possession in fact has greater force and is more irrevocable, without being any more legitimate, at least for foreigners. For with regard to its members, the State is master of all their goods by the social contract which serves as the basis of all rights within the State; but with regard to other Powers it is master of all of its members' goods only by the right of the first occupant which it derives from private individuals.

[2] The right of the first occupant, although more real than the right of the stronger, becomes a true right only after the right of property has been established. Every man naturally has the right to everything he needs; but the positive act that makes him the proprietor of some good excludes him from all the rest. Having received his share, he must be bound by it, and he has no further

right to the community [of goods]. That is why the right of the first occupant, so weak in the state of nature, is respected by everyone living in civil society. [366] In this right one respects not so much what is another's as what is not one's own.

[3] In general, to authorize the right of the first occupant to any piece of land, the following conditions must apply. First, that this land not yet be inhabited by anyone; second, that one occupy only as much of it as one needs to subsist: In the third place, that one take possession of it not by a vain ceremony, but by labor and cultivation, the only sign of property which others ought to respect in the absence of legal titles.

[4] Indeed, does not granting the right of the first occupant to need and to labor extend it as far as it can go? Can this right be left unbounded? Shall it suffice to set foot on a piece of common land forthwith to claim to be its master? Shall having the force to drive other men off it for a moment suffice to deprive them of the right ever to return? How can a man or a people seize an immense territory and deprive all mankind of it except by a punishable usurpation, since it deprives the rest of mankind of a place to live and of foods which nature gives to all in common? When Núñez Balboa, standing on the shore, took possession of the southern seas and of all of South America in the name of the crown of Castile, was that enough to dispossess all of its inhabitants and to exclude all the Princes of the world? If it had been, then such ceremonies were repeated quite unnecessarily, and all the catholic King had to do was from his council-chamber all at once to take possession of the entire universe; except for afterwards subtracting from his empire what the other Princes already possessed before.

[5] It is intelligible how individuals' combined and contiguous pieces of ground become the public territory, and how the right of sovereignty, extending from subjects to the land they occupy, becomes at once real and personal; which places the possessors in a position of greater dependence, and turns their very forces into the guarantors of their fidelity. This advantage seems not to have been fully appreciated by ancient monarchs who, only calling themselves Kings of the Persians, of the Scythians, of the Macedonians, seem to have looked upon themselves as chiefs of men rather than as masters of the country. Present-day monarchs [367] more

[OC III, 395]

## BOOK III

Before speaking of the various forms of Government, let us try to fix the precise meaning of this term, which has not been adequately explained so far.

CHAPTER ONE  
OF GOVERNMENT IN GENERAL

[1] I warn the reader that this chapter has to be read carefully, and that I lack the art of being clear to those who are not willing to be attentive.

[2] Every free action has two causes which concur in producing it, one moral, namely the will which determines it, the other physical, namely the power which executes it. When I walk toward an object, it is necessary, in the first place, that I will to go to it; in the second place, that my feet carry me to it. Let a paralytic will to run, let a limber man will not to do so, both stay where they are. The body politic has the same motive causes; here, too, a distinction is drawn between force and will: The latter being called *legislative power*, the former *executive power*. Nothing is or should be done in the body politic without their concurrence.

[3] We have seen that the legislative power belongs to the people, and can belong only to it. It is easy to see that, on the contrary, by the principles established above, the executive power cannot belong to the generality [of the people] in its Legislative or Sovereign capacity; for this power consists solely in particular acts which are not within the province of the law, nor, consequently, within that of the [396] Sovereign, since all of the Sovereign's acts can only be laws.

[4] The public force therefore has to have its own agent which unites and puts it to work in accordance with the directives of the general will, which serves as a means of communication between the State and the Sovereign, which in a sense does for the public person what the union of soul and body does in man. This is the reason why, within the State, there is Government, improperly confused with the Sovereign, of which it is merely the minister.

[5] What, then, is Government? An intermediate body established between subjects and Sovereign so that they might conform to one another, and charged with the execution of the laws and the maintenance of freedom, both civil and political.

[6] The members of this body are called magistrates or *Kings*, that is to say Governors, and the body as a whole bears the name *Prince*.\* Thus those who contend that the act by which a people subjects itself to chiefs is not a contract are perfectly right. It is absolutely nothing but a commission, an office in which they, as mere officers of the Sovereign, exercise in its name the power it has vested in them, and which it can limit, modify, and resume, since alienation of such a right is incompatible with the nature of the social bond and contrary to the aim of the association.

[7] I therefore call *Government* or supreme administration the legitimate exercise of the executive power, and Prince or Magistrate the man or the body charged with that administration.

[8] It is in the Government that are located the intermediate forces whose relations constitute the relation of the whole to the whole, or of the Sovereign to the State. This last relation can be represented as the ratio between the extremes of a continued proportion of which the mean proportional is the Government. The Government receives from the Sovereign the orders which it gives the people, and for the State to be well balanced it is necessary that, all other things being equal, the product or power of the Government taken by itself be equal to the product or power of the citizens who are sovereign on the one hand, and subjects on the other.

[397] [9] What is more, none of these three terms could be altered without immediately destroying the proportion. If the Sovereign wants to govern, or the magistrate to give laws, or the subjects refuse to obey, disorder replaces rule, force and will no longer act in concert, and the dissolved State thus falls into despotism or anarchy. Finally, since there is only one mean proportional between each pair, there is also no more than one good government possible in any one State: But since a thousand events can change the relations of a people, not only can different governments be good

\* Thus in Venice, the college [of Senators] is called *most serene Prince* even when the Doge is not in attendance.

for different peoples, but they can also be good for the same people at different times.

[10] To try to give some idea of the various relations which may obtain between these two extremes, I shall take as an example the number of the people, as this relation is easier to express.

[11] Let us assume that the State is composed of ten thousand Citizens. The Sovereign can only be considered collectively and in a body: But every particular person in his capacity as a subject is considered individually: Thus the Sovereign is to the subject as ten thousand is to one: That is to say that each member of the State has but a ten-thousandth of the Sovereign authority as his own share, although all of him is subject to it. Let the people be composed of a hundred thousand men, the subjects' state does not change, and each one bears the full empire of the laws equally, whereas his vote, reduced to a hundred thousandth, exercises ten times less influence in drafting the laws. Thus, since the subject always remains one, the ratio of Sovereign [to subject] increases in proportion to the number of Citizens. Whence it follows that the more the State expands, the more freedom is diminished.

[12] When I say that the ratio increases, I mean that it moves farther away from equality. Thus the greater the ratio is in the Geometer's sense of the term, the smaller it is in the ordinary sense; in the first sense, the ratio considered in terms of quantity is measured by the quotient, and in the other sense, considered in terms of identity, it is gauged by similarity.

[13] Now, the smaller the ratio of individual wills to the general will, that is to say of morals to the laws, the more does the repressive force have to increase. Hence in order to be good, the Government has to have relatively more force in proportion as the people is more numerous.

[398] [14] On the other hand, since the expansion of the State offers the trustees of the public authority more temptations and more means to misuse their power, it follows that the more force the Government has to have in order to contain the people, the more force does the Sovereign have to have in its turn in order to contain the Government. I am not here speaking about an absolute force, but about the relative force of the various parts of the State.

[15] It follows from this double ratio that the continued proportion of Sovereign, Prince and people is not an arbitrary idea but

a necessary consequence of the nature of the body politic. It further follows that since one of the extremes, namely the people as subjects, is fixed and represented by unity, every time the doubled ratio increases or decreases, the single ratio similarly increases or decreases, and the middle term is correspondingly changed. This shows that there is no unique and absolute constitution of Government but that there may be as many Governments differing in nature as there are States differing in size.

[16] If, in order to reduce this system to ridicule, it were said that, according to me, finding this mean proportional and forming the body of the Government requires no more than taking the square root of the number of the people, I would reply that I am here using this number only as an example; that the ratios about which I am speaking are measured not only by numbers of men, but more generally by the amount of activity, which is the combined result of a great many causes; that, besides, if in order to express myself in fewer words I momentarily borrow the language of geometry, I am nevertheless not unaware of the fact that geometric precision does not obtain in moral quantities.

[17] The Government is on a small scale what the body politic which contains it is on a large scale. It is a moral person endowed with certain faculties, active like the Sovereign, passive like the State, which can be analyzed into further, similar relations, from which a new proportion consequently arises, and within it yet another proportion corresponding to the judiciary, until an indivisible middle term is reached, that is to say a single chief or supreme magistrate, who might be conceived of in the middle of this progression as the unity between the series of fractions and of the series of integers.

[18] Without getting involved in this proliferation of [399] terms, let us leave it at considering the Government as a new body in the State, distinct from both the people and the Sovereign, and intermediate between them.

[19] The essential difference between these two bodies is that the State exists by itself, and the Government exists only by [virtue of] the Sovereign. Thus the Prince's dominant will is or should be nothing but the general will or the laws; the Prince's force is nothing but the public force concentrated in it: as soon as it wills to derive some absolute and independent act from itself, the

cohesion of the whole begins to slacken. If in the end it came to pass that the Prince had a private will more active than the Sovereign's and that in heeding that private will it used the public force in its power, so that there would be, so to speak, two Sovereigns, one by right and the other in fact; the social union would instantly vanish, and the body politic be dissolved.

[20] Yet for the body of the Government to have existence, a real life which distinguishes it from the body of the State, for all of its members to be able to act in concert and to assume responsibility for the end for which it is instituted, it has to have a particular *self*, a sensibility common to its members, a force, a will of its own that tends to its preservation. Such a particular existence presupposes assemblies, councils, power to deliberate, to decide, rights, titles, privileges which belong exclusively to the Prince and make the magistrate's position more honorable in proportion as it is more demanding. The difficulties consist in ordering this subordinate whole within the whole, so that it does not weaken the general constitution by strengthening its own, that it always keeps its particular force intended for its own preservation distinct from the public force intended for the preservation of the State, and that, in a word, it is ever ready to sacrifice the Government to the people, and not the people to the Government.

[21] However, although the artificial body of the Government is the work of another artificial body, and has, as it were, only a borrowed and subordinate life, this does not keep it from being able to act more or less vigorously or promptly, to enjoy, so to speak, a more or less robust health. Finally, without directly departing [400] from the goal of its institution, it may deviate from it more or less, depending on how it is constituted.

[22] It is from all of these differences that arise the various relations which ought to obtain between the Government and the body of the State, taking into account the accidental and particular relations by which that State is modified. For often the Government which is in itself the best will become the most vicious, if its relations are not adjusted to the defects of the body politic to which it belongs.

CHAPTER TWO  
OF THE PRINCIPLE WHICH CONSTITUTES THE VARIOUS  
FORMS OF GOVERNMENT

[1] In order to set out the general cause of these differences, it is necessary to distinguish here between the Prince and the Government, as above I distinguished between the State and the Sovereign.

[2] The body of the magistracy may be composed of a greater or lesser number of members. We have said that the ratio of Sovereign to subjects was greater in proportion as the number of the people was more numerous, and by an obvious analogy we can say the same about the Government in relation to the Magistrates.

[3] Now, since the total force of the Government is always that of the State, it never varies: from which it follows that the more of this force it uses on its own members, the less it has left to act on the whole people.

[4] Hence the more numerous the Magistrates, the weaker the Government. Since this maxim is fundamental, let us try to clarify it more fully.

[5] We can distinguish three essentially different wills in the person of the Magistrate: First, the individual's own will, which tends solely to his particular advantage; second, the common will of the Magistrates which is exclusively concerned with the advantage of the Prince, and may be called the corporate will, which is general in relation to the Government and particular in relation to the State of which the Government is a part; in the third place, the will of the people or the [401] sovereign will, which is general in relation both to the State considered as the whole, and to the Government considered as a part of the whole.

[6] In a perfect legislation, the particular or individual will should be null, the Government's own corporate will should be very subordinate, and consequently the general or sovereign will should always be dominant and the sole rule of all the others.

[7] According to the natural order, on the contrary, the more concentrated these different wills are, the more active they grow. Thus the general will is always the weakest, the corporate will occupies second place, and the particular will the first place of all: so that in the Government each member is first of all himself, and

then Magistrate, and then citizen. A gradation that is the direct opposite of that required by the social order.

[8] Let this be given: now assume the entire Government in the hands of a single man. The particular will and the corporate will are then perfectly united, and consequently the corporate will is at the highest degree of intensity it can attain. Now, since the use of force depends on the degree of will, and since the Government's absolute force never varies, it follows that the most active of Governments is that of a single man.

[9] On the contrary, let us combine the Government with the legislative authority; let us turn the Sovereign into the Prince and all the citizens into so many Magistrates: Then the corporate will, merged with the general will, is no more active than it, and leaves the individual will in its full force. Thus the Government, with the same absolute force, will be at its *minimum* of relative force or activity.

[10] These relations are beyond dispute, and other considerations only confirm them further. For example, it is evident that each magistrate is more active within his [corporate] body than each citizen is in his, and consequently that a particular will has far more influence in the actions of Government than it has in the actions of the Sovereign; for each magistrate is almost always responsible for some function of the Government, whereas each citizen taken by himself exercises no function of sovereignty. Besides, the more the State expands, the more its real force increases, although it does not increase in proportion to [402] its size: but if the State remains the same, then regardless of how much the magistrates multiply, the Government does not thereby gain greater real force, because this force is the force of the State, whose extent is still the same. Thus the relative force or activity of the Government diminishes, while its real force or activity cannot increase.

[11] Again, it is certain that business gets dispatched less expeditiously in proportion as more people are in charge of it, that by conceding too much to prudence not enough is conceded to fortune, that opportunity is allowed to escape, and that the fruits of deliberation are often lost by deliberating too much.

[12] I have just proved that the Government grows slack in proportion as magistrates multiply, and earlier I proved that the more numerous the people, the more must the repressive force increase.

From which it follows that the ratio of magistrates to Government should be the inverse of the ratio of subjects to Sovereign: That is to say that the more the State grows, the more should the Government shrink; by so much that the number of chiefs should diminish in proportion to the increase of people.

[13] However, I am here speaking only about the relative force of the Government, and not about its uprightness: For, on the contrary, the more numerous the body of the magistrates, the more closely does the corporate will approach the general will; whereas under a single magistrate this same corporate will is, as I have said, merely a particular will. Thus is lost on one side what might be gained on the other, and the art of the Lawgiver consists in knowing how to determine the point at which the force and the will of the Government, which are always inversely proportional, can be combined in the relation [or ratio] most advantageous to the State.

### CHAPTER THREE CLASSIFICATION OF GOVERNMENTS

[1] In the preceding chapter we have seen why the various kinds or forms of Government are distinguished according to the number of the members who compose them; in the present chapter it remains to be seen how this classification is made.

[403] [2] The Sovereign can, in the first place, entrust the charge of Government to the whole people or to the majority of the people, so that there be more citizens who are magistrates than citizens who are simple particulars. This form of Government is given the name *Democracy*.

[3] Or else it can restrict the Government into the hands of a small number, so that there be more simple Citizens than magistrates, and this form bears the name *Aristocracy*.

[4] Finally, it can concentrate the whole of Government in the hands of a single magistrate from whom all the rest derive their power. This third form is the most common, and is called *Monarchy* or royal Government.

[5] It should be noted that all of these forms, or at least the first two, admit of more or less, and they do so within a rather wide range; for Democracy can encompass the whole people or restrict

itself to as few as half. Aristocracy, in turn, can restrict itself to anywhere from half the people to the smallest number. Even Royalty admits of being shared to a certain extent. Sparta consistently had two Kings by constitution, and the Roman Empire is known to have had as many as eight Emperors at once, without its being possible to say that the Empire was divided. Thus there is a point at which each form of Government merges into the next, and it is evident that under just these three headings, Government admits of as many different forms as the State has Citizens.

[6] What is more: Since this same Government can in certain respects subdivide itself into different parts, one administered one way, the other another way, the combination of these three forms can result in a multitude of mixed forms, each of which can be multiplied by all the simple forms.

[7] There has always been much argument about the best form of Government, without considering that each one of them is the best in some cases, and the worst in others.

[8] If in each State the number of supreme magistrates should be inversely proportional to the number of Citizens, it follows that in general Democratic Government suits small States, Aristocratic Government suits [404] medium-sized ones, and Monarchy large ones. This rule is directly derived from the principle; but how is one to enumerate the many circumstances which can make for exceptions to the rule?

#### CHAPTER FOUR OF DEMOCRACY

[1] He who makes the law knows better than anyone else how it should be executed and interpreted. It would therefore seem that there could be no better constitution than one in which the executive power is combined with the legislative: But this is precisely what makes this Government inadequate in certain respects, for things which ought to be kept distinct are not kept distinct, and the Prince and the Sovereign being nothing but the same person, form, so to speak, nothing but a Government without a Government.

[2] It is not good that he who makes the laws execute them, nor that the body of the people turn its attention away from general considerations, to devote it to particular objects. Nothing is more dangerous than the influence of private interests on public affairs, and abuse of the laws by the Government is a lesser evil than the corruption of the Lawgiver, which is the inevitable consequence of particular considerations. Then, the State being adulterated in its very substance, all reform becomes impossible. A people which would never misuse the Government would not misuse independence either; a people which would always govern well would not need to be governed.

[3] In the strict sense of the term, a genuine Democracy never has existed, and never will exist. It is against the natural order that the greater number govern and the smaller number be governed. It is unimaginable that the people remain constantly assembled to attend to public affairs, and it is readily evident that it could not establish commissions to do so without the form of the administration changing.

[4] Indeed, I believe I can posit as a principle that when the functions of Government are divided among [405] several tribunals, the least numerous sooner or later acquire the greatest authority; if only because of the ease in dispatching business, which naturally leads them to acquire it.

[5] Besides, how many things difficult to combine does not this Government presuppose? First, a very small State where the people is easily assembled, and where every citizen can easily know all the rest; second, great simplicity of morals to preclude excessive business and thorny discussions; next, much equality of ranks and fortunes, without which equality of rights and authority could not long subsist: Finally, little or no luxury; for luxury is either the effect of riches, or makes them necessary; it corrupts rich and poor alike, the one by possession, the other by covetousness; it sells out the fatherland to laxity, to vanity; it deprives the State of all its Citizens by making them slaves to one another, and all of them slaves to opinion.

[6] That is why a famous Author attributed virtue to Republics as their principle; for all these conditions could not subsist without virtue: but for want of drawing the necessary distinctions, this noble



genius often lacked in precision, sometimes in clarity, and he failed to see that since Sovereign authority is everywhere the same, the same principle must obtain in every well-constituted State, more or less, it is true, according to the form of the Government.

[7] Let us add that there is no Government as subject to civil wars and intestine turmoil as Democratic or popular Government, because there is none which tends so strongly and so constantly to change its form, nor any which requires greater vigilance and courage to maintain in its form. It is in this constitution above all that the Citizen must arm himself with force and steadfastness, and every day of his life say in the bottom of his heart what a virtuous Palatine\* said in the Diet of Poland: "I prefer a perilous freedom to quiet servitude."

[406] [8] If there were a people of Gods, they would govern themselves democratically. So perfect a Government is not suited to men.

#### CHAPTER FIVE OF ARISTOCRACY

[1] We have here two very distinct moral persons, namely the Government and the Sovereign, and consequently two general wills, one in relation to all the citizens, the other only for the members of the administration. Thus, although the Government may regulate its internal policy as it pleases, it may never speak to the people except in the name of the Sovereign, that is to say in the name of the people itself; which should never be forgotten.

[2] The first societies governed themselves aristocratically. The chiefs of families deliberated among themselves about the public business; young people readily yielded to the authority of experience. Hence the names *Priests, elders, senate, gerontes*. The savages of northern America still govern themselves this way in our day, and they are very well governed.

[3] But in proportion as instituted inequality prevailed over natural inequality, riches or power\* was given preference over age, and

\* The Palatine of Posnania, father of the King of Poland, Duke of Lorraine.

\* It is clear that among the ancients the term *Optimates* does not mean the best, but the most powerful.

Aristocracy became elective. Finally, power bequeathed to the children together with the father's goods made families patrician, Government became hereditary, and there were twenty-year-old Senators.

[4] There are, then, three kinds of Aristocracy: natural, elective, hereditary. The first is suited only to simple peoples; the third is the worst of all Governments. The second is the best; it is Aristocracy properly so called.

[5] In addition to having the advantage of distinguishing between the two powers, Aristocracy has the advantage of choosing its members; for in [407] popular Government all Citizens are born magistrates, whereas this Government restricts them to a small number, and they become magistrates only by being elected;\* a means by which probity, enlightenment, experience, and all the other reasons for public preferment and esteem are so many further guarantees of being well governed.

[6] Moreover, assemblies are more easily convened, business is discussed better, and dispatched in a more orderly and diligent fashion, the State's prestige is better upheld abroad by venerable senators than by an unknown and despised multitude.

[7] In a word, the best and most natural order is to have the wisest govern the multitude, so long as it is certain that they will govern it for its advantage and not for their own; institutions and procedures should not be multiplied needlessly, nor should twenty thousand men be employed to do what a hundred well chosen men can do even better. But it must be noted that here the corporate interest begins to guide the public force less in accordance with the standard of the general will, and that another inevitable decline deprives the laws of a portion of the executive power.

[8] With regard to suitable particular circumstances, the State should not be so small nor the people so simple and upright that the execution of the laws follows directly from the public will, as it does in a good Democracy. Nor should the nation be so large

\* It is very important to regulate by laws the form of electing magistrates; because if it is left to the will of the Prince, hereditary Aristocracy is the inevitable consequence, as it was in the Republics of *Venice* and of *Berne*. Indeed, the first has long since been a dissolved State, whereas the second maintains itself through the extreme wisdom of its Senate; it is a most honorable and a most dangerous exception.

that the chiefs, scattered in order to govern it, can make decisions on behalf of the Sovereign, each in his own department, and begin by making themselves independent only to end up becoming the masters.

[9] But while Aristocracy requires somewhat fewer virtues than popular Government, it also requires others which are properly its own; such as moderation among the rich and contentment among the poor; for it seems that a rigorous equality would be out of place in Aristocracy; it was not even observed in Sparta.

[408] [10] Besides, while this form [of Government] involves a certain inequality of fortune, it does so primarily so that in general the administration of the public business be entrusted to those who can best devote all of their time to it, and not, as Aristotle contends, so that the rich always be preferred. On the contrary, it is important that an opposite choice should occasionally teach the people that men's merit offers more important reasons for preference than do riches.

#### CHAPTER SIX OF MONARCHY

[1] So far we have considered the Prince as a moral and collective person, united by the force of laws, and the trustee of the executive power within the State. We now have to consider this power gathered in the hands of a natural person, of a real man, who alone has the right to exercise it according to the laws. He is what is called a Monarch, or a King.

[2] In direct contrast to the other administrations, in which a collective being represents an individual, in this administration an individual represents a collective being; so that the moral unity which constitutes the Prince is at the same time a physical unity in which are naturally combined all the faculties which it is so difficult for the law to combine in a collective being.

[3] Thus the will of the people, and the will of the Prince, and the public force of the State, and the particular force of the Government, everything responds to the same mover, all of the machine's levers are in the same hand, everything proceeds toward the same goal, no opposing motions cancel one another, and no kind of constitution can be imagined in which less effort would produce greater

action. Archimedes sitting quietly on the shore and effortlessly launching a large Vessel represents for me a skillful monarch governing his vast States from his study and making everything move while himself appearing to be unmoving.

[409] [4] But while there is no Government that is more vigorous, there is none where the particular will has greater sway and more easily dominates the other wills; everything proceeds toward the same goal, it is true, but that goal is not public felicity, and the very force of the Administration constantly works to the prejudice of the State.

[5] Kings want to be absolute, and from afar men call out to them that the best way to be so is to make themselves loved by their peoples. The maxim is very fine, and in some respects even very true. Unfortunately it will always be laughed at in Courts. The power that comes from the peoples' love is unquestionably the greatest; but it is precarious and conditional, and Princes will never be satisfied with it. The best Kings want to be able to be wicked if they please, without ceasing to be masters: A political sermonizer may well tell them that since the people's force is their force, their greatest interest is to have the people flourishing, numerous, formidable; they know perfectly well that this is not true. Their personal interest is first of all that the People be weak, wretched, and never able to resist them. I admit that, assuming always perfectly submissive subjects, it would be in the Prince's interest that the people be powerful, so that this power, being his, might render him formidable to his neighbors; but since this is only a secondary and subordinate interest, and the two assumptions are incompatible, it is natural that Princes always prefer the maxim that is most immediately useful to them. This is what Samuel forcefully represented to the Hebrews; it is what Machiavelli has conclusively shown. While pretending to teach lessons to Kings, he taught great lessons to peoples. Machiavelli's *Prince* is the book of republicans.\*

\* Machiavelli was an honest man and a good citizen: but being attached to the house of the Medici, he was forced during the oppression of his fatherland to disguise his love of freedom. The very choice of his execrable Hero suffices to exhibit his secret intention, and the contradiction between the maxims of his Book on the Prince and those of his discourses on Titus Livy and of his history of Florence proves that this profound politician has so far had only superficial or corrupt Readers. The Court of Rome has severely prohibited his book, and I should think that it would: it is the Court he depicts most clearly. [Note added in the 1782 edn.]

[6] We found on the basis of general relations [or ratios] that monarchy is suited only to large States, and we again find it to be so upon examining monarchy in itself. The more numerous the public administration, the more the ratio of Prince to subjects decreases and approaches equality, so that in Democracy this ratio is one [to one] or equality itself. This same ratio increases in proportion as the Government contracts, and it is at its maximum when the Government is in the hands of a single man. [410] The distance between Prince and People is then too great, and the State lacks cohesion. To form such cohesion, intermediate orders are therefore needed: to fill these, Princes, Grandees, nobility are needed. Now, none of this is suited to a small state, which all such gradations ruin.

[7] But if it is difficult for a large State to be well governed, it is much more difficult for it to be well governed by a single man, and everyone knows what happens when the King rules through proxies.

[8] One essential and inevitable defect which will always make monarchical government inferior to republican government is that in Republics the public voice almost never elevates to the highest places any but enlightened and capable men who occupy them with honor: whereas those who succeed in monarchies are most often nothing but petty bunglers, petty knaves, petty schemers whose petty talents, which at Court give access to high places, only serve to show the public their ineptitude just as soon as they have acceded to these high places. The people is much less often mistaken in this choice than the Prince, and a man of true merit in a [royal] ministry is almost as rare as a fool at the head of a republican government. Indeed, when by some happy accident one of those men who are born to govern takes the helm of affairs in a Monarchy which has been almost ruined by those crowds of fancy managers, everyone is utterly amazed at the resources he discovers, and it marks an epoch in a country[’s history].

[9] For a monarchic State to be well governed, its size or extent would have to be commensurate with the faculties of the one who governs. It is easier to conquer than to rule. Given an adequate lever, a single finger can move the world, but it takes the shoulders of Hercules to hold it up. If a State is at all large, the Prince is almost always too small. On the other hand, when the State happens

to be too small for its chief, which is very rarely the case, it is still badly governed because the chief, forever pursuing his own large views, forgets the peoples’ interests, and makes them no less unhappy by misusing his excess of talents, than would a stupid chief for want of the talents he lacks. A kingdom should, so to speak, expand or [411] contract with each reign according to the Prince’s scope; by contrast, the talents of a Senate being of a more settled measure, the State can have stable boundaries and the administration run no less well.

[10] The most perceptible inconvenience of Government by a single man is the lack of that continuous succession which in the two others forms an unbroken bond. When a King dies, another is needed; elections leave dangerous intervals, they are stormy, and unless the Citizens are disinterested and upright to an extent scarcely compatible with this [form of] Government, intrigue and corruption will play their part. It is unlikely that he to whom the State has sold itself will not sell it in turn, and that he will not seek compensation at the expense of the weak for the money extorted from him by the powerful. Sooner or later everything becomes venal under such an administration, and then the peace enjoyed under Kings is worse than the disorder of interregna.

[11] What has been done to prevent these evils? Crowns have been made hereditary in certain families, and an order of Succession has been established which prevents any dispute upon the death of Kings: That is to say that, by substituting the inconvenience of regencies for that of elections, apparent tranquility has been given preference over wise administration, and the risk of having children, monsters, imbeciles for chiefs was preferred to having to dispute about the choice of good Kings; they failed to consider that by thus taking a chance on this alternative they put almost all the odds against themselves. It was a very sensible remark the Younger Dionysius made when his father, reproving him for a shameful action, said: “Did I set you such an example?” “Ah,” the son replied, “your father was not a King!”

[12] Everything conspires to deprive of justice and reason a man brought up to command others. Great pains are taken, so they say, to teach young Princes the art of ruling; it does not appear that this education profits them. It would be better to begin by teaching them the art of obeying. The greatest Kings renowned in history

were not brought up to rule; it is a science one never possesses less than after having learned it to excess, and which one acquires better by obeying than by commanding. "The most practical and [412] shortest way to distinguish what is good and what is bad is to consider what you would or would not have wished for under another Prince."\*

[13] One consequence of this lack of coherence is the instability of royal government which, following now one plan, now another, depending on the character of the ruling Prince or of those who rule for him, cannot long have a fixed objective or a consistent policy: a mutability which forever causes the State to drift from maxim to maxim, from project to project, and does not occur in the other Governments where the Prince is always the same. Thus one sees that in general, while there is more cunning at Court, there is more wisdom in a Senate, and that Republics pursue their goals in the light of views that are more steadily held and more closely adhered to, whereas every revolution in the [royal] Ministry produces a revolution in the State; for it is the common maxim of all Ministers and almost all Kings in all things to do the opposite of what their predecessors did.

[14] This same incoherence also provides the solution to a sophism common among royalist politicians; that is not only to compare civil Government to domestic Government and the Prince to the father of a family, a fallacy which has already been refuted, but also liberally to endow this magistrate with all the virtues he would need, and always to assume that the Prince is what he should be: an assumption with the help of which royal Government is evidently preferable to any other, because it is incontrovertibly the strongest, and all it lacks to be also the best is a corporate will more consonant with the general will.

[15] But if, according to Plato,\* a King by nature is such a rare person, how often will nature and fortune concur to crown him, and if a royal education necessarily corrupts those who receive it, what can be expected of a succession of men brought up to rule? It is therefore deliberate self-deception to confuse royal Government with the Government of a good King. In order to see what

\* Tacit[us], *Hist[ories]*, Bk. 1.

\* *Statesman*.

this Government is in itself, it has to be considered as it is under stupid or wicked Princes; for either that is what they will be when they accede to the throne, or it is what the throne will make them be.

[413] [16] Our Authors have noticed these difficulties, but they have not been disturbed by them. The remedy, they say, is to obey without a murmur. God in his wrath sends bad Kings, and they must be endured as punishments from Heaven. Such a discourse is, no doubt, edifying; but I wonder whether it would not be more appropriate in the pulpit than in a book on politics. What would one say about a Physician who promised miracles, and whose whole art consisted in exhorting his sick to be patient? Everyone knows perfectly well that when there is a bad government, it has to be put up with; the problem is to find a good one.

#### CHAPTER SEVEN OF MIXED GOVERNMENTS

[1] Properly speaking, there is no simple Government. A single Chief has to have subordinate Magistrates; a popular Government has to have a Chief. Thus in the distribution of executive power there is always a gradation from the larger to the smaller number, with this difference that sometimes the larger number depends on the smaller, and sometimes the smaller depends on the larger.

[2] At times the distribution is equal; either when the constituent parts are dependent on one another, as in the Government of England; or when the authority of each part is independent but imperfect, as in Poland. This latter form is bad because the Government is without any unity, and the State lacks cohesion.

[3] Which is better, a simple or a mixed Government? The question is much debated by politicians, and it should be given the same answer I gave above about all forms of Government.

[4] In itself simple Government is best, just because it is simple. But when the executive Power is not sufficiently dependent on the legislative, that is to say when the ratio of Prince to Sovereign is greater than that of People to Prince, this lack of proportion has to be remedied [414] by dividing the Government; for then its several parts have no less authority over the subjects, and their division reduces their combined force against the Sovereign.

[5] The same inconvenience can also be forestalled by establishing intermediate magistrates who, leaving the Government whole, merely serve to balance the two Powers and to uphold their respective rights. Then the Government is not mixed, it is tempered.

[6] Similar means can be used to remedy the opposite inconvenience, and when the Government is too slack, Tribunals can be set up to give it concentration. This is the practice of all Democracies. In the first case the Government is divided in order to weaken it, and in the second in order to reinforce it; for the *maximum* of force and of weakness are both found in simple Governments, whereas mixed forms make for moderate force.

CHAPTER EIGHT  
THAT NOT EVERY FORM OF GOVERNMENT IS SUITED  
TO EVERY COUNTRY

[1] Freedom, not being a fruit of every Clime, is not within the reach of every people. The more one meditates upon this principle established by Montesquieu, the more one senses its truth. The more one challenges it, the more opportunities one provides to establish it with new proofs.

[2] In all Governments of the world the public person consumes but produces nothing. Where, then, does it get the substance it consumes? From its members' labor. It is the particulars' surplus which produces the public's necessities. Whence it follows that the civil state can subsist only as long as men's labor yields in excess of their needs.

[3] Now, this overplus is not the same in every country of the world. In some it is considerable, in others moderate, in others nil, in others negative. [415] This relation depends on the fertility of the climate, the kind of labor the soil requires, the nature of its products, the force of its inhabitants, the greater or lesser amount they need to consume, and on various similar relations that go to make it up.

[4] On the other hand, Governments are not all of the same nature; some are more and some less rapacious, and their differences

are based on this further principle that the farther public contributions move from their source, the more burdensome they are. This burden should be measured not by the amount of taxes, but by how far they have to travel to return into the hands from which they came; when this circulation is prompt and efficient, then it does not matter whether one pays little or much; the people is always rich, and the finances always in good order. By contrast, regardless of how little the People gives, if it never gets this little back, it is soon exhausted by constantly giving; the State is never rich, and the people is always destitute.

[5] From which it follows that the greater the distance between the people and the Government grows, the more burdensome do taxes become: thus in a Democracy the people is least burdened, in an Aristocracy it is burdened more, in a Monarchy it bears the greatest weight. Hence Monarchy is suited only to opulent nations, Aristocracy to States moderate in wealth as well as in size, Democracy to small and poor States.

[6] Indeed the more one reflects on this, the greater does the difference which one finds in this respect between free and monarchical States prove to be; in the former everything is used for the public utility; in the latter, public and particular forces are reciprocal, and one increases by the other's weakening. Finally, despotism, instead of governing subjects in order to make them happy, makes them miserable in order to govern them.

[7] Here then are some natural causes in every clime by which one can determine the form of Government toward which the force of the climate directs it, and even tell what kind of inhabitants it should have. Barren and sterile places where the product is not worth the labor should be left uninhabited and deserted, or peopled only by Savages: Places where man's labor yields only the bare necessities should be inhabited by [416] barbarous peoples, since any polity would be impossible there: places where the excess of produce over labor is moderate suit free peoples; those where an abundant and fertile soil yields much produce in return for little labor lend themselves to being governed monarchically so that the Prince's luxury might consume the excess of the subjects' surplus; for it is better that this excess be absorbed by the government than squandered by private individuals. There are exceptions, I know;

but these very exceptions confirm the rule in that sooner or later they produce revolutions which restore things to the order of nature.

[8] Let us always distinguish between general laws and the particular causes which can modify their effect. Even if the entire south were covered with Republics and the entire north with despotic States it would be no less true that in terms of the effect of climate despotism suits warm countries, barbarism cold countries, and good polity intermediate regions. I do also see that one might grant the principle but dispute the application: one might hold that some cold countries are extremely fertile, and some warm ones extremely barren. But this is a difficulty only for those who fail to look at the matter in all of its relations. As I have already said, the relations of labor, of forces, of consumption, etc. all have to be taken into account.

[9] Let us assume that one of two equal pieces of land yields five, the other ten. If the inhabitants of the first consume four, and the second nine, the excess of the first product will be  $1/5$  and that of the second  $1/10$ . Since, then, the ratio of these two excesses is the inverse of that of their products, the land producing only five will yield a surplus double that of the surplus yielded by the land producing ten.

[10] But there is no question of getting double the product, and I do not believe that anyone would venture to hold that the fertility of cold countries is in general even equal to that of warm countries. However, let us assume such an equality; let us equate, if you wish, England with Sicily, and Poland with Egypt. Farther south we will have Africa and the Indies, farther north we will have nothing more. For the sake of this equality of product, what a difference in cultivation. In Sicily it is enough to scratch the soil; in England what efforts it takes to till it! Now, where [417] more hands are needed to get the same product, the superflux must necessarily be less.

[11] Consider, further, that the same number of people consume much less in warm countries. There the climate requires that one practice moderation to stay healthy; Europeans who want to live there as they do at home all die of dysentery and indigestions: *We are*, says Chardin, *carnivorous beasts, wolves, by comparison with the Asians. There are those who attribute the Persians' moderation to the fact that their country is less cultivated; but I believe on the contrary*

*that their country is less abundant in commodities because the inhabitants need fewer. If their frugality, he goes on, were an effect of the country's poverty, only the poor would eat little, whereas in general everyone does, and one would eat more or less in different provinces depending on the fertility of the land, whereas the same moderation is found throughout the Kingdom. They take great pride in their way of living, saying that one need only look at their complexion to see how much superior their way is to the Christians'! Indeed, the Persians' complexion is clear; their skin is fair, delicate, smooth, whereas the complexion of the Armenians, their subjects, who live in the European manner, is coarse, blotchy, and their bodies are fat and heavy.*

[12] The closer one draws to the equator, the less do peoples live off. They eat almost no meat; rice, maize, couscous, millet, cassava, are their ordinary food. In the Indies there are millions of men whose food costs no more than a penny a day. Even in Europe we notice sensible differences in appetite between the peoples of the north and those of the south. A Spaniard will live for a week on a German's dinner. In the countries where men are more voracious objects of consumption also become objects of luxury. In England luxury appears on a table laden with meat; in Italy you are regaled with sweets and flowers.

[13] Luxury in clothing also exhibits similar differences. In climates where the seasons change rapidly and violently, clothes are better and simpler, in climates where people dress for display they strive more for effect than for utility, and the clothes themselves are a luxury. In Naples you will daily see men strolling along the Posilippo in gold-embroidered jackets and no hose. The same holds true regarding buildings; magnificence is the only consideration when there is no [418] damage to fear from the weather. In Paris, in London, one wants to be housed warmly and comfortably. In Madrid they have superb drawing rooms, but no windows that close, and they sleep in rat-holes.

[14] Foods are far more substantial and succulent in warm countries; this is a third difference that cannot fail to influence the second. Why do they eat so many vegetables in Italy? Because they are good, nutritious, and extremely tasty: In France, where they are fed nothing but water, they are not at all nutritious, and count for almost nothing at table. Yet they take up no less land, and are at least as much trouble to grow. It is a matter of experience that the

wheats of Barbary yield much more flour than do those of France, although they are inferior to them in other respects, and that French wheats in turn yield more than do those of the North. From which it may be inferred that a similar gradation going in the same direction generally obtains from the equator to the pole. And is it not a manifest disadvantage to get a smaller amount of nourishment from an equal amount of produce?

[15] To these various considerations I can add another which follows from them and reinforces them; it is that warm countries need inhabitants less than do cold countries, and could feed more of them; this produces a double surplus which invariably redounds to the advantage of despotism. The larger the area which a constant number of inhabitants occupy, the more difficult it is to revolt; because it is impossible to take concerted action quickly or in secret, and it is always easy for the Government to get wind of plans and to cut communications: but the closer together a numerous people draws, the less can the Government usurp from the Sovereign; chiefs deliberate as securely in their chambers as the Prince does in his council, and the crowd assembles as quickly in public squares as troops do in their barracks. In this respect great distances are therefore to a tyrannical Government's advantage. With the help of the support groups which it sets up, its force increases with distance, like that of levers.\* By contrast, the people's force acts only when concentrated; it evaporates and is lost as it spreads, like the effect of gunpowder scattered on the ground and which ignites only grain by grain. The least populous countries are thus the most suited to Tyranny: wild beasts reign only in wildernesses.

#### CHAPTER NINE OF THE SIGNS OF A GOOD GOVERNMENT

[1] Hence the question, which is absolutely the best Government,

\* This does not contradict what I said above, Bk. II, ch. 9, about the inconveniences of large States; for there it was a question of the Government's authority over its members, and here it is a question of its force [419] against its subjects. Its scattered members serve it as fulcra for acting on the people at a distance, but it has no fulcrum for acting directly on these members themselves. Thus in the one case the length of the lever makes for its weakness, and in the other for its force.

does not admit to a solution because it is indeterminate: or, if you prefer, it has as many good solutions as there are possible combinations in the absolute and the relative positions of peoples.

[2] But if one were to ask by what sign one might tell whether a given people is well or badly governed, it would be a different matter, and the question of fact can be resolved.

[3] Yet it is left unresolved, because everyone wants to resolve it in his own way. Subjects praise public tranquility, Citizens individual freedom; one prefers security of possessions, and the other that of persons; one wants the best Government to be the most severe, the other maintains that it is the mildest; this one wants crimes to be punished, and that one wants them prevented; one thinks it a fine thing to be feared by neighbors, the other prefers to be ignored by them; one is satisfied when money circulates, the other demands that the people have bread. Even if agreement were reached on these points and others like them, would one be any better off? Since moral qualities lack a precise yardstick, even if there were agreement about the sign, how is agreement to be reached about applying it?

[4] For my own part, I am always astonished that people should fail to recognize so simple a sign, or have the bad faith not to agree on it. What is the aim of the political association? [420] It is the preservation and prosperity of its members. And what is the surest sign that they are preserving themselves and prospering? It is their number and their population. Look no further, then, for this much disputed sign. All other things equal, the Government under which the Citizens, without resort to external means, without naturalizations, without colonies, populate and multiply, is without fail the best: that under which a people dwindles and wastes away is the worst. Calculators, it is now up to you: count, measure, compare.\*

\* The same principle should be used to judge which centuries deserve preference with respect to the prosperity of humankind. People have too much admired those that have seen letters and the arts flourish, without inquiring into the secret of their cultivation, without considering their fatal effect, *such was their ignorance that they called humanity what was a beginning of servitude*. Shall we never discern in the maxims of books the coarse interest that causes the Authors to speak? No, regardless of what they may say, when for all of its brilliance a country gets depopulated, then it is not true that all is well, and one poet's having an income of a hundred thousand *livres* is not enough for his to be the best of all centuries. One should focus less on apparent repose and on the chiefs' tranquility than on the well-being of entire nations and above all of the most numerous estates. Hail

City is very small. But if it is very small, will it not be subjugated? No. I shall show below\* how the external power of a great People can be combined with the simple administration and the good order of a small State.

[432]

CHAPTER SIXTEEN  
THAT THE INSTITUTION OF THE GOVERNMENT IS NOT  
A CONTRACT

[1] Once the legislative Power is well established, it remains likewise to establish the Executive power; for this latter, which operates only by particular acts, inasmuch as it is not of the essence of the former, is naturally separate from it. If it were possible for the Sovereign, considered as such, to have the executive power, right and fact would be so utterly confounded that one could no longer tell what is law and what is not, and the body politic thus denatured would soon fall prey to the violence against which it was instituted.

[2] The Citizens being all equal by the social contract, all may prescribe what all ought to do, but no one has the right to require that another do what he himself does not do. Now, it is specifically this right, indispensable for endowing the body politic with life and motion, that the Sovereign assigns to the Prince by instituting the Government.

[3] Some have claimed that this act of establishing Government was a contract between the People and the chiefs it gives itself; a contract stipulating for the two parties the conditions under which the one obligated itself to command, and the other to obey. Everyone will agree, I am sure, that this is an odd way of contracting! But let us see whether this opinion is tenable.

[4] First, the supreme authority can no more be modified than it can be alienated, to limit it is to destroy it. It is absurd and contradictory for the Sovereign to give itself a superior; to obligate oneself to obey a master is to return to one's full freedom.

\* That is what I had planned to do in the sequel to this work when, in dealing with foreign relations, I would have come to confederations. The subject is entirely new and its principles have yet to be established.

[5] Moreover, it is clear that this contract of the people with specific persons would be a particular act. From which it follows that this contract could not be a law or an act of sovereignty, and that consequently it would be illegitimate.

[6] It is further evident that with respect to one another the contracting parties would be under the law of nature alone and without any guarantor [433] of their reciprocal engagements, which is in every way at odds with the civil state: Since whoever controls the force is invariably master of the execution, one might as well call "contract" the act of a man who said to another, "I give you all my goods on condition that you will give me back as much of it as you please."

[7] There is only one contract in the State, the contract of association; and it, by itself alone, excludes any others. It is impossible to imagine any public Contract that would not be a violation of the first.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN  
OF THE INSTITUTION OF GOVERNMENT

[1] What, then, is the idea in terms of which one should conceive of the act by which Government is instituted? I shall begin by noting that this act is complex or composed of two others, namely the establishment of law, and the execution of law.

[2] By the first, the Sovereign enacts that a body of Government of this form or that shall be established; and it is clear that this act is a law.

[3] By the second, the People appoints the chiefs who will be entrusted with the established Government. Now since this appointment is a particular act it is not a second law, but merely a consequence of the first and a function of Government.

[4] The difficulty is to understand how there can be an act of Government before the Government exists, and how the People, which is only either Sovereign or subject, can become Prince or Magistrate in certain circumstances.

[5] Here again is revealed one of those astonishing properties of the body politic by which it reconciles apparently contradictory operations. For this reconciliation is accomplished by a sudden