

PART I

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[1] However important it may be, in order to judge soundly regarding Man's natural state, to consider him from his origin, and to examine him, so to speak, in the first Embryo of the species, I shall not follow his organization throughout its successive developments: I shall not pause to search in the animal System what he may have been at the beginning, if he was eventually to become what he now is; I shall not examine whether, as Aristotle thinks, his elongated nails were at first hooked claws; whether he was as hairy as a bear and whether, walking on all fours, (iii) his gaze directed to the Earth, and confined to a horizon of a few paces, determined both the character and the limits of his ideas. I could form only vague and almost imaginary conjectures on this subject: Comparative Anatomy has as yet made too little progress, the observations of Naturalists are as yet too uncertain to permit establishing the basis of a solid argument on such foundations; so that, without resorting to the supernatural knowledge we have on this point, and without taking into account the changes that must have occurred in man's internal and the external conformation, as he gradually put his limbs to new uses, and took up new foods, I shall assume him always conformed as I see him today, walking on two feet, using his hands as we do ours, directing his gaze over the whole of Nature, and with his eyes surveying the vast expanse of Heaven.

[2] By stripping this Being, so constituted, of all the supernatural gifts he may have received, and of all the artificial faculties he could only have acquired by prolonged progress; by considering him, in a word, such as he must have issued from the hands of Nature, I see an animal [135] less strong than some, less agile than others, but, all things considered, the most advantageously organized of all: I see him sating his hunger beneath an oak, slaking his thirst at the first Stream, finding his bed at the foot of the same tree that supplied his meal, and with that his needs are satisfied.

[3] The Earth, abandoned to its natural fertility (iv), and covered by immense forests which no Axe ever mutilated, at every step offers Storage and shelter to the animals of every species. Men, dispersed among them, observe, imitate their industry, and so raise themselves to the level of the Beasts' instinct, with this advantage

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that each species has but its own instinct, while man perhaps having none that belongs to him, appropriates them all, feeds indifferently on most of the various foods (v) which the other animals divide among themselves, and as a result finds his subsistence more easily than can any one of them.

[4] Accustomed from childhood to the inclemencies of the weather, and the rigor of the seasons, hardened to fatigue, and forced to defend naked and unarmed their life and their Prey against the other ferocious Beasts or to escape them by running, Men develop a robust and almost unalterable temperament; The Children, since they come into the world with their Fathers' excellent constitution and strengthen it by the same activities that produced it, thus acquire all the vigor of which the human species is capable. Nature deals with them exactly as the Law of Sparta did with the Children of Citizens; It makes those who have a good constitution strong and robust, and causes all the others to perish; differing in this from our societies, where the State kills Children indiscriminately before their birth by making them a burden to their Fathers.

[5] Since his body is the only tool which savage man knows, he puts it to various uses of which our bodies are incapable for want of practice, and it is our industry that deprives us of the strength and the agility which necessity obliges him to acquire. If he had had an ax, could his wrist have cracked such solid branches? If he had had a sling, could he have thrown a stone as hard by hand? If he had had a ladder, could he have climbed a tree as nimbly? If he had had a Horse, could he have run as fast? Give civilized man [136] the time to gather all his machines around him, there can be no doubt that he will easily overcome Savage man; but if you want to see an even more unequal contest, have them confront each other naked and unarmed, and you will soon recognize the advantage of constantly having all one's strengths at one's disposal, of being ever ready for any eventuality and of, so to speak, always carrying all of oneself along with one (vi).

[6] Hobbes contends that man is naturally intrepid, and seeks only to attack, and to fight. An illustrious Philosopher thinks, on the contrary, and Cumberland and Pufendorf also maintain, that nothing is as timid as man in the state of Nature, and that he is forever trembling, and ready to flee at the least noise that strikes him, at the least movement he notices. This may be so with regard

to objects he does not know, and I do not doubt that he is frightened by every new Sight that presents itself to him, whenever he cannot distinguish between the Physical good or evil he can expect from it, nor compare his strength with the dangers he has to outrun; circumstances that are rare in the state of Nature, where everything proceeds in such a uniform fashion, and where the face of the Earth is not subject to the sudden and constant changes caused in it by the passions and the inconstancy of Peoples assembled. But Savage man, living dispersed amongst the animals, and early finding himself in the position of having to measure himself against them, soon makes the comparison and, feeling that he surpasses them in skill more than they do him in strength, learns to fear them no more. Set a bear or a wolf against a sturdy, agile, courageous Savage, as they all are, armed with stones, and a good stick, and you will see that the danger will at the very least be mutual, and that after several such experiences, ferocious Beasts, disinclined as they are to attack one another, will not readily attack man, whom they will have found to be just as ferocious as themselves. As for the animals that really do have more strength than he has skill, he is in the same position with regard to them as are the other weaker species which none the less continue to subsist; with this advantage on man's side that, since he runs just as well as they, and can find almost certain refuge in trees, he has the initiative in any encounter, as well as the choice of [137] fleeing or fighting. Let us add that it does not seem that any animal naturally wars against man, except in the case of self-defense or of extreme hunger, or that any bears him those violent antipathies that seem to announce that one species is destined by Nature to serve as fodder for the other.

[7] These are undoubtedly the reasons why Negroes and Savages worry so little about the ferocious beasts they might meet up with in the woods. In this respect the Caribs of Venezuela, among others, live in the most profound security and without the slightest inconvenience. Although they are almost naked, says François Corréal, they do not hesitate boldly to take their chances in the woods, armed only with bow and arrow; yet nobody has ever heard of a single one of them being devoured by beasts.

[8] Other, more formidable, enemies against which man has not the same means of defense are the natural infirmities, childhood, old age, and illnesses of every kind: Melancholy signs of our weak-

ness, of which the first two are common to all animals, and the last belongs primarily to man living in Society. As regards Childhood, I even note that, since the Mother carries her child with her everywhere, she can feed it much more readily than can the female of a number of animals, forced as they are to wear themselves out going back and forth, one way to find their food, the other to suckle or feed their young. It is true that if the woman happens to perish, the child runs a considerable risk of perishing with her; but this danger is common to a hundred other species whose young are for a long time not in a condition to forage for themselves; and while Childhood lasts longer among us, life also does, so that everything remains more or less equal in this respect (vii); although there are other rules regarding the duration of the first period of life and the number of young, (viii) which do not pertain to my Subject. Among Old people, who act and perspire little, the need for food diminishes together with the capacity to provide for it; And since Savage life keeps gout and rheumatisms from them, and old age is the one of all ills which human assistance can least alleviate, they eventually expire without anyone's noticing that they are ceasing to be, and almost without their noticing it themselves.[138]

[9] Regarding illnesses, I shall not repeat the vain and false declamations against Medicine by most healthy people; but I shall ask whether there is any solid evidence to conclude that in Countries where this art is most neglected man's average life span is shorter than in those where it is cultivated with the greatest care; And how could it be, if we inflict upon ourselves more ills than Medicine can provide Remedies! The extreme inequality in ways of life, the excess of idleness among some, the excess of work among others, the ease with which our appetites and our sensuality are aroused and satisfied, the excessively exotic dishes of the rich, which fill them with inflammatory humors and wrack them with indigestions, the bad food of the Poor, which most of the time they do not even have, and the want of which leads them greedily to overtax their stomachs when they get the chance, the late nights, the excesses of every kind, the immoderate transports of all the Passions, the fatigues and exhaustion of the Mind, the innumerable sorrows and pains that are experienced in every station of life and that constantly gnaw away at men's souls; Such are the fatal proofs that most of our ills are of our own making, and that we would have avoided

almost all of them if we had retained the simple, uniform and solitary way of life prescribed to us by Nature. If it destined us to be healthy then, I almost dare assert, the state of reflection is a state against Nature, and the man who meditates is a depraved animal. When one considers the good constitution of Savages, at least of those we have not ruined with our strong liquors, when one realizes that they know almost no other illnesses than wounds and old age, one is strongly inclined to believe that the history of human diseases could easily be written by following that of civil Societies. Such at least is the opinion of Plato who, on the basis of certain Remedies used or approved by Podalirius and Machaon at the siege of Troy, judges that various diseases which these remedies should have brought on were at that time not yet known among men. And Celsus reports that dieting, which is nowadays so necessary, was only invented by Hippocrates. [139]

[10] With so few sources of illness, man in the state of Nature has, then, little need for remedies, and even less for Doctors; in this respect too, the human species is no worse off than all the others, and one can easily find out from Hunters whether they come across many unhealthy animals in their treks. They do find some with massive, very well-healed wounds, that had bones and even limbs broken and knit with no other Surgeon than time, no other regimen than their ordinary life, and are no less perfectly cured for not having been tormented by incisions, poisoned by Drugs, or exhausted by fasts. In short, however useful well-administered medicine may be among us, it is in any event certain that while the sick Savage abandoned to himself alone has nothing to hope for but from Nature, in return he has nothing to fear but from his illness, and this often makes his situation preferable to ours.

[11] Let us therefore beware of confusing Savage man with the men we have before our eyes. Nature treats all animals abandoned to its care with a partiality that seems to indicate how jealous it is of this right. The Horse, the Cat, the Bull, even the Ass are, most of them, larger in size, all of them have a sturdier constitution, greater vigor, force, and courage in the forests than in our homes; they lose half of these advantages when they are Domesticated, and it would seem that all our care to treat and to feed these animals well only succeeds in bastardizing them. The same is true of man himself: As he becomes sociable and a Slave, he becomes weak,

timorous, groveling, and his soft and effeminate way of life completes the enervation of both his strength and his courage. Let us add that the difference between one man and another in the Savage and in the Domesticated condition must be even greater than that between one beast and another; for since animal and man were treated alike by Nature, all the conveniences which man gives himself above and beyond those he gives the animals he tames are so many particular causes that lead him to degenerate more appreciably.

[12] To go naked, to be without habitation, and to be deprived of all the useless things we believe so necessary is, then, not such a great misfortune for these first men nor, above all, is it such a great obstacle to their preservation. [140] While their skin is not very hairy, they do not need it to be in warm Countries, and in cold Countries they soon learn to appropriate the skins of the Beasts they have overcome; though they have only two feet for running, they have two arms to provide for their defense and for their needs; Their Children may walk late and with difficulty, but the Mothers carry them with ease: an advantage not enjoyed by the other species where the mother, when pursued, finds herself compelled to abandon her young or to adjust her pace to theirs.* Finally, unless one assumes the singular and fortuitous concatenations of circumstances, of which I shall speak in the sequel, and which could very well never have occurred, it is for all intents and purposes clear that he who first made himself clothes or a Dwelling thereby provided himself with things that are not very necessary, since he had done without them until then, and since it is not evident why he could not have tolerated as a grown man a mode of life he had tolerated from childhood.

[13] Alone, idle, and always near danger, Savage man must like to sleep and be a light sleeper like the animals which, since they think little, sleep, so to speak, all the time they do not think: Self-preservation being almost his only care, his most developed faculties

* There may be a few exceptions to this. For example that of the animal from the province of Nicaragua which resembles a Fox, has feet like a man's hands and, according to Corréal, has a pouch under its belly into which the mother puts her young when she has to flee. This is probably the same animal which in Mexico is called *Tlaquatzin*, and to the female of which Laët attributes a similar pouch serving the same purpose.

must be those that primarily serve in attack and defense, either in order to overcome his prey or to guard against becoming another animal's prey: By contrast, the organs that are perfected only by softness and sensuality must remain in a state of coarseness which precludes every kind of delicacy in him; and since his senses differ in this respect, his touch and taste will be extremely crude; his sight, hearing and smell most acute: Such is the animal state in general, and, according to Travelers' reports, it is also that of [141] most Savage Peoples. It is therefore not surprising that the Hottentots of the Cape of Good Hope can sight Ships with the naked eye as far out on the high seas as the Dutch can with Telescopes, nor that the Savages of America track the Spaniards by smell just as well as the best Dogs might have done, nor that all these Barbarous Nations tolerate their nakedness without discomfort, whet their taste with hot Peppers, and drink European Liquors like water.

[14] Until now I have considered only Physical Man; Let us now try to view him from the Metaphysical and Moral side.

[15] I see in any animal nothing but an ingenious machine to which nature has given senses in order to wind itself up and, to a point, protect itself against everything that tends to destroy or to disturb it. I perceive precisely the same thing in the human machine, with this difference that Nature alone does everything in the operations of the Beast, whereas man contributes to his operations in his capacity as a free agent. The one chooses or rejects by instinct, the other by an act of freedom; as a result the Beast cannot deviate from the Rule prescribed to it even when it would be to its advantage to do so, while man often deviates from it to his detriment. Thus a Pigeon would starve to death next to a Bowl filled with the choicest meats, and a Cat atop heaps of fruit or of grain, although each could very well have found nourishment in the food it disdains if it had occurred to it to try some; thus dissolute men abandon themselves to excesses which bring them fever and death; because the Mind depraves the senses; and the will continues to speak when Nature is silent.

[16] Every animal has ideas, since it has senses; up to a point it even combines its ideas, and in this respect man differs from the Beast only as more does from less: Some Philosophers have even suggested that there is a greater difference between one given man and another than there is between a given man and a given beast; It

is, then, not so much the understanding that constitutes the specific difference between man and the other animals, as it is his property of being a free agent. Nature commands every animal, and the Beast obeys. Man [142] experiences the same impression, but he recognizes himself free to acquiesce or to resist; and it is mainly in the consciousness of this freedom that the spirituality of his soul exhibits itself: for Physics in a way explains the mechanism of the senses and the formation of ideas; but in the power of willing, or rather of choosing, and in the sentiment of this power, are found purely spiritual acts about which nothing is explained by the Laws of Mechanics.

[17] But even if the difficulties surrounding all these questions left some room for disagreement about this difference between man and animal, there is another very specific property that distinguishes between them, and about which there can be no argument, namely the faculty of perfecting oneself; a faculty which, with the aid of circumstances, successively develops all the others, and resides in us, in the species as well as in the individual, whereas an animal is at the end of several months what it will be for the rest of its life, and its species is after a thousand years what it was in the first year of those thousand. Why is man alone liable to become imbecile? Is it not that he thus returns to his primitive state and that, whereas the Beast, which has acquired nothing and also has nothing to lose, always keeps its instinct, man again losing through old age or other accidents all that his *perfectibility* had made him acquire, thus relapses lower than the Beast itself? It would be sad for us to be forced to agree that this distinctive and almost unlimited faculty, is the source of all of man's miseries; that it is the faculty which, by dint of time, draws him out of that original condition in which he would spend tranquil and innocent days; that it is the faculty which, over the centuries, causing his enlightenment and his errors, his vices and his virtues to bloom, eventually makes him his own and Nature's tyrant (ix). It would be frightful to be obliged to praise as a beneficent being him who first suggested to the inhabitant of the Banks of the Orinoco the use of the Slats he ties to his Children's temples, and which insure at least a measure of their imbecility, and of their original happiness.

[18] Savage Man, left by Nature to bare instinct alone, or rather compensated for the instinct he perhaps lacks, by faculties capable

of initially making up for it, and [143] of afterwards raising him far above nature, will then begin with purely animal functions: (x) to perceive and to sense will be his first state, which he will have in common with all animals. To will and not to will, to desire and to fear, will be the first and almost the only operations of his soul until new circumstances cause new developments in it.

[19] Regardless of what the Moralists may say about it, the human understanding owes much to the Passions which, as is commonly admitted, also owe much to it: It is by their activity that our reason perfects itself; We seek to know only because we desire to enjoy, and it is not possible to conceive why someone who had neither desires nor fears would take the trouble to reason. The Passions, in turn, owe their origin to our needs, and their progress to our knowledge; for one can only desire or fear things in terms of the ideas one can have of them, or by the simple impulsion of Nature; and Savage man, deprived of every sort of enlightenment, experiences only the Passions of this latter kind; his Desires do not exceed his Physical needs (xi); The only goods he knows in the Universe are food, a female, and rest; the only evils he fears are pain, and hunger; I say pain, and not death; for an animal will never know what it is to die, and the knowledge of death, and of its terrors, is one of man's first acquisitions on moving away from the animal condition.

[20] If I had to do so, I could easily buttress this sentiment with facts, and show that in all Nations of the world, progress of the Mind proportioned itself exactly to the needs, which Peoples received from Nature, or to which circumstances subjected them, and consequently to the passions, which inclined them to satisfy these needs. I would show the arts being born in Egypt, and spreading with the floodings of the Nile; I would follow their progress among the Greeks, where they were seen to burgeon, grow, and rise to the Heavens amid the Sands and Rocks of Attica, without being able to take root on the fertile Banks of the Eurotas; I would point out that in general the Peoples of the North [144] are more industrious than those of the south because they can less afford not to be so, as if Nature wanted in this way to equalize things, by endowing Minds with the fertility it denies the Soil.

[21] But without resorting to the uncertain testimonies of History, who fails to see that everything seems to remove from Savage

man the temptation as well as the means to cease being savage? His imagination depicts nothing to him; his heart asks nothing of him. His modest needs are so ready to hand, and he is so far from the degree of knowledge necessary to desire to acquire greater knowledge, that he can have neither foresight nor curiosity. The spectacle of Nature becomes so familiar to him that he becomes indifferent to it. Forever the same order, forever the same revolutions; he lacks the wit to wonder at the greatest marvels; and it is not to him that one will turn for the Philosophy man needs in order to be able to observe once what he has seen every day. His soul, which nothing stirs, yields itself to the sole sentiment of its present existence, with no idea of the future, however near it may be, and his projects, as limited as his views, hardly extend to the close of day. Such is still nowadays the extent of the Carib's foresight: He sells his Cotton bed in the morning and comes weeping to buy it back in the evening, for not having foreseen that he would need it for the coming night.

[22] The more one meditates on this subject, the greater does the distance between pure sensations and the simplest knowledge grow in our eyes; and it is impossible to conceive how a man could, by his own strength alone, without the help of communication, and without the goad of necessity, have crossed so great a divide. How many centuries perhaps elapsed before men were in a position to see any other fire than that of Heaven? How many different chance occurrences must they have needed before they learned the most common uses of this element? How many times must they have let it go out before they mastered the art of reproducing it? And how many times did each one of these secrets perhaps die together with its discoverer? What shall we say about agriculture, an art requiring so much labor and foresight: dependent on other arts, which can quite obviously be pursued [145] only in a society that has at least begun, and which we use not so much to draw forth from the Earth foods it would readily yield without agriculture as to force it to [conform to] the predilections that are more to our taste? But let us suppose that men had multiplied so much that natural produce no longer sufficed to feed them; a supposition which, incidentally, would point to one great advantage for the human Species in this way of living; Let us suppose that without forges, and without Workshops, the tools for Farming had dropped from Heaven into the Savages' hands; that these men had overcome the mortal hatred

they all have of sustained work; that they had learned to foresee their needs sufficiently far ahead, that they had guessed how to cultivate the Earth, sow seed, and plant Trees; that they had found the art of grinding Wheat and of fermenting grapes; all of them things which the Gods had to be made to teach them, for want of conceiving how they could have learned them on their own; what man would, after all this, be so senseless as to torment himself with cultivating a Field that will be despoiled by the first passer-by, man or beast, fancying this harvest; and how will everyone resolve to spend his life doing hard work when the more he needs its rewards, the more certain he is not to reap them? In a word, how can this situation possibly dispose men to cultivate the Earth so long as it has not been divided among them, that is to say so long as the state of Nature is not abolished?

[23] Even if we should wish to suppose a Savage man as skillful in the art of thinking as our Philosophers make him out to be; even if, following their example, we should make of him a Philosopher as well, who discovers alone the most sublime truths, who by chains of extremely abstract reasoning establishes for himself maxims of justice and reason derived either from the love of order in general, or from the known will of his Creator; In a word, even if we should suppose him to have a mind as intelligent and as enlightened as it must be, and, indeed, is found to be, heavy and stupid, what use would the Species derive from all this Metaphysics, which could not be communicated and would perish with the individual who [146] had invented it? What progress could Mankind make, scattered in the Woods among the Animals? And how much could men perfect and enlighten one another who, having neither a fixed Dwelling nor any need of one another, might perhaps meet no more than twice in their life, without recognizing and speaking with one another?

[24] If one considers how many ideas we owe to the use of speech; How much Grammar exercises and facilitates the operations of the Mind; if one thinks about the inconceivable efforts and the infinite time the first invention of Languages must have cost; if one adds these reflections to those that preceded, then one can judge how many thousands of Centuries would have been required for the successive development in the human Mind of the Operations of which it was capable.

[25] Let me be allowed briefly to consider the perplexities regarding the origin of Languages. I could leave it at here quoting or restating the Abbé de Condillac's investigations of this matter, all of which fully confirm my sentiment, and which perhaps suggested its first idea to me. But since the manner in which this Philosopher resolves the difficulties he himself raises regarding the origin of instituted signs shows that he assumed what I question, namely some sort of society already established among the inventors of language, I believe that I ought to supplement the reference to his reflections with reflections of my own, in order to exhibit these same difficulties in the light best suited to my subject. The first difficulty that arises is to imagine how languages could have become necessary; for, Men having no relations with one another and no need of any, one cannot conceive the necessity or the possibility of this invention if it was not indispensable. I would be prepared to say, as many others do, that Languages arose in the domestic dealings between Fathers, Mothers and Children: but not only would this fail to meet the objections, it would be to commit the fallacy of those who, in reasoning about the state of Nature, carry over into it ideas taken from Society, and always see the family assembled in one and the same dwelling and its members maintaining among themselves as intimate and as permanent a union as they do among us, where so many common interests [147] unite them; whereas in this primitive state, without Houses or Huts or property of any kind, everyone bedded down at random and often for one night only; males and females united fortuitously, according to chance encounters, opportunity, and desire, without speech being an especially necessary interpreter of what they had to tell one another; they parted just as readily; (xii) The mother at first nursed her Children because of her own need; then, habit having made them dear to her, she went on to feed them because of theirs; as soon as they had the strength to forage on their own, they left even the Mother; And since almost the only way to find one another again was not to lose sight of one another in the first place, they soon were at the point of not even recognizing each other. Note, further, that since the Child has all of its needs to explain, and hence has more things to say to the Mother than the Mother has to the Child, it is the child that must contribute most to the invention, and that the language it uses must largely be of its own making; which

multiplies Languages by as many as there are individuals who speak them; their roving and vagabond life further contributes to this multiplication of languages, since it allows no idiom enough time to stabilize; for to say that the Mother dictates to the Child the words it will have to use in order to ask her for one thing or another shows how already formed Languages are taught, but it does not teach how they are formed.

[26] Let us suppose this first difficulty overcome: Let us for a moment cross the immense distance that must have separated the pure state of Nature from the need for Languages; and, by assuming them to be necessary (XIII), let us inquire how they might have begun to get established. New difficulty, even worse than the preceding one; for if Men needed speech in order to learn how to think, they needed even more to know how to think in order to find the art of speech; and even if it were understood how the sounds of the voice came to be taken for the conventional interpreters of our ideas, it would still leave open the question of what could have been the interpreters of that convention for ideas which, having no sensible object, could not be pointed to by gesture or by voice, so that it is scarcely possible to form [148] tenable conjectures about the origin of this Art of communicating one's thoughts, and of establishing exchanges between Minds: A sublime art which is already so far from its Origin but which the Philosopher sees as still so immensely far removed from perfection that no one is bold enough to assure that it will ever be reached, even if the revolutions which time necessarily brings about were suspended in its favor, even if Prejudices were to retire from Academies or fall silent before Them, and They could attend to this thorny topic for Centuries together without interruption.

[27] Man's first language, the most universal, the most energetic and the only language he needed before it was necessary to persuade assembled men, is the cry of Nature. Since this cry was wrested from him only by a sort of instinct on urgent occasions, to implore help in great dangers or relief in violent ills, it was not of much use in the ordinary course of life, where more moderate sentiments prevail. When men's ideas began to expand and to multiply, and closer communication was established among them, they sought more numerous signs and a more extensive language: They multiplied the inflections of the voice and added gestures which are by

their Nature more expressive, and less dependent for their meaning on prior agreement. Thus they expressed visible and moving objects by means of gestures, and objects that strike the ear by imitative sounds: but because gesture indicates almost only present or easily described objects and visible actions; because it is not universally serviceable since darkness or an interfering body render it useless, and because it requires attention rather than exciting it; it finally occurred to men to substitute for it the articulations of the voice which, although they do not stand in the same relation to some ideas, are better suited to represent them all, inasmuch as they are instituted signs; a substitution which can only have been made by common consent, which men whose crude vocal apparatus had as yet had no practice must have found rather difficult to implement, and which is even more difficult to conceive of in itself, since this unanimous agreement must have been motivated, and since speech [149] seems to have been very necessary in order to establish the use of speech.

[28] It would seem that the first words men used had in their Mind a much wider reference than do words used in already formed Languages, and that since they were ignorant of the Division of Discourse into its constituent parts, they at first assigned to each word the meaning of an entire proposition. When they began to distinguish between subject and predicate, and verb and noun, which was no mean feat of genius, substantives were at first just so many proper names, the present infinitive was the only tense of verbs, and as for adjectives, the very notion must have developed only with great difficulty, because every adjective is an abstract word, and abstractions are difficult and not particularly natural Operations.

[29] Each object was at first given a particular name without regard to kinds and Species, which these first Institutors were not in a position to distinguish; and all particulars presented themselves to their mind in isolation, just as they are in the picture of Nature. If one Oak was called A, another Oak was called B; for the first idea one derives from two objects is that they are not the same, and it often takes a good deal of time to notice what they have in common: so that the more limited knowledge was, the more extensive did the Dictionary grow. The clutter of all this Nomenclature was not easily cleared: for, in order to subsume the beings under

common and generic designations, their properties and differences had to be known; observations and definitions were needed, that is to say much more Natural History and Metaphysics than the men of that time could have had.

[30] Besides, general ideas can enter the Mind only with the help of words, and the understanding grasps them only by means of propositions. That is one of the reasons why animals could not form such ideas, nor ever acquire the perfectibility that depends on them. When a Monkey unhesitatingly goes from one nut to another, [150] are we to think that he has the general idea of this sort of fruit and compares its archetype with these two particulars? Surely not; but the sight of one of these nuts recalls to his memory the sensations he received from the other, and his eyes, modified in a certain way, announce to his taste how it is about to be modified. Every general idea is purely intellectual; if the imagination is at all involved, the idea immediately becomes particular. Try to outline the image of a tree in general to yourself, you will never succeed; in spite of yourself it will have to be seen as small or large, bare or leafy, light or dark, and if you could see in it only what there is in every tree, the image would no longer resemble a tree. Purely abstract beings are either seen in this same way, or conceived of only by means of discourse. Only the definition of a Triangle gives you the genuine idea of it: As soon as you figure one in your mind, it is a given Triangle and not another, and you cannot help making its lines perceptible or its surface colored. Hence one has to state propositions, hence one has to speak in order to have general ideas: for as soon as the imagination stops, the mind can proceed only by means of discourse. If, then, the first Inventors could give names only to the ideas they already had, it follows that the first substantives could never have been anything but proper names.

[31] But when, by means which I cannot conceive, our new Grammarians began to expand their ideas and to generalize their words, the Inventors' ignorance must have restricted this method to within very narrow bounds; and as they had at first gone too far in multiplying the names of particulars because they did not know kinds and species, they subsequently made too few species and kinds because they had not considered the Beings in all their differences. Extending the divisions far enough would have required more experience and enlightenment than they could have had, and

more research and work than they were willing to devote to it. If even nowadays new species are daily discovered which had so far escaped all our observations, think how many must have eluded men who judged things only by their first impression! As for primary Classes and the most [151] general notions, it would be superfluous to add that they, too, must have escaped them: How, for instance, would they have imagined or understood the words matter, mind, substance, mode, figure, motion, since our Philosophers, who have been using them for such a long time, have considerable difficulty understanding them themselves, and since, the ideas attached to these words being purely Metaphysical, they found no model of them in Nature?

[32] I pause after these first steps, and beg my Judges to suspend their Reading here, to consider, in the light of the invention of Physical nouns alone, that is to say in the light of the most easily found part of Language, how far it still has to go before it can express all of men's thoughts, assume a stable form, admit of being spoken in public, and have an influence on Society: I beg them to reflect on how much time and knowledge it took to find numbers (xiv), abstract words, Aorists, and all the tenses of Verbs, particles, Syntax, to connect Propositions, arguments, and to develop the entire Logic of Discourse. As for myself, frightened by the increasing difficulties, and convinced of the almost demonstrated impossibility that Languages could have arisen and been established by purely human means, I leave to anyone who wishes to undertake it the discussion of this difficult Problem: which is the more necessary, an already united Society for the institution of Languages, or already invented Languages for the establishment of Society?

[33] Whatever may be the case regarding these origins, it is at least clear, from how little care Nature has taken to bring Men together through mutual needs and to facilitate their use of speech, how little it prepared their Sociability, and how little of its own it has contributed to all that men have done to establish its bonds. Indeed, it is impossible to imagine why, in that primitive state, a man would need another man any more than a monkey or a Wolf would need his kind, or, assuming this need, to imagine what motives could induce the other to attend to it, or even, if he did, how they might agree on terms. I know that we are repeatedly told that nothing would have been as miserable as man in this state; and

if it is true, as I believe [152] I have proven, that he could have had the desire and the opportunity to leave it only after many Centuries, then this would be an Indictment of Nature, not of him whom nature had so constituted; but if I understand this term *miserable* correctly, it is a word either entirely devoid of sense, or which merely signifies a painful privation and suffering of Body or soul: Now, I should very much like to have it explained to me what kind of misery there can be for a free being, whose heart is at peace, and body in health. I ask, which of the two, Civil life or natural life, is more liable to become intolerable to those who enjoy it? Almost all the People we see around us complain of their existence, and some even deprive themselves of it as far as they are able, and the combination of divine and human Laws hardly suffices to stop this disorder: I ask whether anyone has ever heard tell that it so much as occurred to a Savage, who is free, to complain of life and to kill himself? One ought, then, to judge with less pride on which side genuine misery lies. Nothing, on the contrary, would have been as miserable as Savage man dazzled by enlightenment, tormented by Passions, and reasoning about a state different from his own. It was by a very wise Providence that the faculties he had in potentiality were to develop only with the opportunities to exercise them, so that they might not be superfluous and a burden to him before their time, nor belated and useless in time of need. In instinct alone he had all he needed to live in the state of Nature, in cultivated reason he has no more than what he needs to live in society.

[34] It would at first seem that men in that state having neither moral relations of any sort between them, nor known duties, could be neither good nor wicked, and had neither vices nor virtues, unless these words are taken in a physical sense and the qualities that can harm an individual's self-preservation are called vices, and those that can contribute to it, virtues; in which case he who least resists the simple impulsions of Nature would have to be called the most virtuous: But without straying from the ordinary sense, we should suspend the judgment we might pass on such a situation, and be wary of our Prejudices until it has been established, Scale in hand, whether there are more virtues than vices among [153] civilized men, or whether their virtues are more advantageous than their vices are detrimental, or whether the progress of their knowledge is sufficient compensation for the harms they do one another

in proportion as they learn of the good they should do, or whether their situation would not, on the whole, be happier if they had neither harm to fear nor good to hope for from anyone, than they are by having subjected themselves to universal dependence and obligated themselves to receive everything from those who do not obligate themselves to give them anything.

[35] Above all, let us not conclude with Hobbes that because he has no idea of goodness man is naturally wicked, that he is vicious because he does not know virtue, that he always refuses to those of his kind services which he does not believe he owes them, or that by virtue of the right which he reasonably claims to the things he needs, he insanely imagines himself to be the sole owner of the entire Universe. Hobbes very clearly saw the defect of all modern definitions of Natural right: but the conclusions he draws from his own definition show that he understands it in a sense that is no less false. By reasoning on the basis of the principles he establishes, this Author should have said that, since the state of Nature is the state in which the care for our own preservation is least prejudicial to the self-preservation of others, it follows that this state was the most conducive to Peace and the best suited to Mankind. He says precisely the contrary because he improperly included in Savage man's care for his preservation the need to satisfy a multitude of passions that are the product of Society and have made Laws necessary. A wicked man is, he says, a sturdy Child; it remains to be seen whether Savage Man is a sturdy Child; Even if it were granted him that he is, what would he conclude? That if this man, when sturdy, were as dependent on others as when he is weak, he would not stop at any kind of excess, that he would strike his Mother if she were slow to give him the breast, that he would strangle one of his young brothers if he discommoded him, that he would bite the other's leg if he hurt or bothered him; but being sturdy and being dependent are two contradictory assumptions in the state of Nature; Man is weak when he is dependent, and he is emancipated before he is sturdy. [154] Hobbes did not see that the same cause that keeps Savages from using their reason, as our Jurists claim they do, at the same time keeps them from abusing their faculties, as he himself claims they do; so that one might say that Savages are not wicked precisely because they do not know what it is to be good; for it is neither the growth of enlightenment nor the curb of the

Law, but the calm of the passions and the ignorance of vice that keep them from evil-doing; *so much more does the ignorance of vice profit these than the knowledge of virtue profits those.* There is, besides, another Principle which Hobbes did not notice and which, having been given to man in order under certain circumstances to soften the ferociousness of his amour propre or of the desire for self-preservation prior to the birth of amour propre, (xv) tempers his ardor for well-being with an innate repugnance to see his kind suffer. I do not believe I need fear any contradiction in granting to man the only Natural virtue which the most extreme Detractor of human virtues was forced to acknowledge. I speak of Pity, a disposition suited to beings as weak and as subject to so many ills as we are; a virtue all the more universal and useful to man as it precedes the exercise of all reflection in him, and so Natural that even the Beasts sometimes show evident signs of it. To say nothing of the tenderness Mothers feel for their young and of the dangers they brave in order to protect them, one daily sees the repugnance of Horses to trample a living Body underfoot; An animal never goes past a dead animal of his own Species without some restlessness: Some even give them a kind of burial; and the mournful lowing of Cattle entering a Slaughter-House conveys their impression of the horrible sight that strikes them. It is a pleasure to see the author of the *Fable of the Bees* forced to recognize man as a compassionate and sensitive Being, and abandon, in the example he gives of it, his cold and subtle style, to offer us the pathetic picture of a man locked up, who outside sees a ferocious Beast tearing a Child from his Mother's breast, breaking his weak limbs with its murderous fangs, and tearing the Child's throbbing entrails with its claws. What a dreadful [155] agitation must not this witness to an event in which he takes no personal interest whatsoever experience? What anguish must he not suffer at this sight, for not being able to give any help to the fainted Mother or the dying Child?

[36] Such is the pure movement of Nature prior to all reflection: such is the force of natural pity, which the most depraved morals still have difficulty destroying, since in our theaters one daily sees being moved and weeping at the miseries of some unfortunate person people who, if they were in the Tyrant's place, would only increase their enemy's torments; like bloodthirsty Sulla, so sensitive to ills which he had not caused, or that Alexander of Pherae who

dared not attend the performance of a single tragedy for fear that he might be seen to moan with Andromache and Priam, but who listened without emotion to the cries of so many citizens daily being murdered on his orders.

*When nature gave man tears,
She proclaimed that he was tender-hearted.*

[37] Mandeville clearly sensed that, for all their morality, men would never have been anything but monsters if Nature had not given them pity in support of reason: but he did not see that from this single attribute flow all the social virtues he wants to deny men. Indeed, what are generosity, Clemency, Humanity, if not Pity applied to the weak, the guilty, or the species in general? Even Benevolence and friendship, properly understood, are the products of a steady pity focused on a particular object; for what else is it to wish that someone not suffer, than to wish that he be happy? Even if it were true that commiseration is nothing but a sentiment that puts us in the place of him who suffers, a sentiment that is obscure and lively in Savage man, developed but weak in Civil man, what difference could this idea make to the truth of what I say, except to give it additional force? Indeed commiseration will be all the more energetic in proportion as the Onlooking animal identifies more intimately with the suffering animal: Now this identification must, clearly, have been infinitely closer in the state of Nature than in the state [156] of reasoning. It is reason that engenders amour propre, and reflection that reinforces it; reason that turns man back upon himself; reason that separates him from everything that troubles and afflicts him: It is Philosophy that isolates him; by means of Philosophy he secretly says, at the sight of a suffering man, perish if you wish, I am safe. Only dangers that threaten the entire society still disturb the Philosopher's tranquil slumber, and rouse him from his bed. One of his kind can with impunity be murdered beneath his window; he only has to put his hands over his ears and to argue with himself a little in order to prevent Nature, which rebels within him, from letting him identify with the man being assassinated. Savage man has not this admirable talent; and for want of wisdom and of reason he is always seen to yield impetuously to the first sentiment of Humanity. In Riots, in Street-brawls, the Populace gathers, the prudent man withdraws; it is the rabble,

it is the Marketwomen who separate the combatants, and keeps honest folk from murdering one another.

[38] It is therefore quite certain that pity is a natural sentiment which, by moderating in every individual the activity of self-love, contributes to the mutual preservation of the entire species. It is pity that carries us without reflection to the assistance of those we see suffer; pity that, in the state of Nature, takes the place of Laws, morals, and virtue, with the advantage that no one is tempted to disobey its gentle voice; pity that will keep any sturdy Savage from robbing a weak child or an infirm old man of his hard-won subsistence if he can hope to find his own elsewhere: pity that, in place of that sublime maxim of reasoned justice *Do unto others as you would have them do unto you*, inspires in all Men this other maxim of natural goodness, much less perfect but perhaps more useful than the first: *Do your good with the least possible harm to others*. It is, in a word, in this Natural sentiment rather than in subtle arguments that one has to seek the cause of the repugnance to evil-doing which every human being would feel even independently of the maxims of education. While Socrates and minds of his stamp may be able to acquire virtue through reason, mankind would long ago [157] have ceased to be if its preservation had depended solely on the reasonings of those who make it up.

[39] With such sluggish passions and such a salutary curb, fierce rather than wicked, and more intent on protecting themselves from the harm they might suffer than tempted to do any to others, men were not prone to very dangerous quarrels: since they had no dealings of any kind with one another; since they therefore knew neither vanity, nor consideration, nor esteem, nor contempt; since they had not the slightest notion of thine and mine, or any genuine idea of justice; since they looked on any violence they might suffer as an easily repaired harm rather than as a punishable injury, and since they did not even dream of vengeance except perhaps mechanically and on the spot like the dog that bites the stone thrown at him; their disputes would seldom have led to bloodshed if they had had no more urgent object than Food: but I see one that is more dangerous, which it remains for me to discuss.

[40] Among the passions that stir man's heart, there is one that is ardent, impetuous, and makes one sex necessary to the other, a

terrible passion that braves all dangers, overcomes all obstacles, and in its frenzy seems liable to destroy Mankind which it is destined to preserve. What must become of men possessed by this unbridled and brutal rage, lacking modesty, lacking restraint, and daily feuding over their loves at the cost of their blood?

[41] It has to be granted from the first that the more violent the passions, the more necessary are Laws to contain them: but quite aside from the fact that the disorders and the crimes they daily cause among us sufficiently prove the inadequacy of the Laws in this respect, it would still be worth inquiring whether these disorders did not arise together with the Laws themselves; for then, even if they could repress them, it is surely the very least to expect of them that they put a stop to an evil that would not exist without them.

[42] Let us begin by distinguishing the moral from the Physical in the sentiment of love. The Physical is this general desire that moves one sex to unite with the other; the moral is what gives this desire its distinctive character and focuses it exclusively on a single object, [158] or at least gives it a greater measure of energy for this preferred object. Now it is easy to see that the moral aspect of love is a factitious sentiment; born of social practice, and extolled with much skill and care by women in order to establish their rule and to make dominant the sex that should obey. This sentiment, since it is based on certain notions of merit or of beauty which a Savage is not in a position to possess, and on comparisons he is not in a position to make, must be almost nonexistent for him: For as his mind could not form abstract ideas of regularity and of proportion, so his heart cannot feel the sentiments of admiration and of love that arise, without our even noticing it, from applying these ideas; he heeds only the temperament he received from Nature, and not a taste which he could not have acquired, and any woman suits him.

[43] Limited to the Physical aspect of love alone, and fortunate enough not to know preferences that exacerbate its sentiment and increase its difficulties, men must feel the ardors of temperament less frequently and less vividly, and hence have fewer and less cruel quarrels among themselves. The imagination, which wreaks such havoc among us, does not speak to Savage hearts; everyone

peacefully awaits the impulsion of Nature, yields to it without choice with more pleasure than frenzy, and, the need once satisfied, all desire is extinguished.

[44] It is therefore indisputable that love itself, like all the other passions, acquired only in society the impetuous ardor that so often causes it to be fatal among men, and it is all the more ridiculous to portray Savages as constantly murdering one another in order to satisfy their brutality, as this opinion goes directly counter to experience, and as the Caribs, which of all existing Peoples has so far deviated least from the state of Nature, are in fact also the most peaceful in their loves and the least given to jealousy, even though they live in a scorching Climate which always seems to rouse these passions to greater activity. [159]

[45] Regarding the inferences that might be drawn in a number of animal species from the fights between the Males that bloody our poultry yards at all seasons or make our forests resound in Springtime with their cries as they feud over a female, we must begin by excluding from consideration all species where Nature has clearly established in the relative power of the Sexes different relations than among us: Thus Cock-fights do not provide a basis for inferences about the human species. In species where the Proportion is more even, such fights can only be caused by the scarcity of females in relation to the number of Males, or by the periods of exclusion during which the female consistently spurns the male's advances, which amounts to the first cause; for if each female tolerates the male only two months out of the year, it is in this respect tantamount to having the number of females reduced by five-sixths: Now, neither of these alternatives applies to the human species, where the number of females generally exceeds that of males, and where, even among Savages, females have never been known to have periods of heat and of rejection, as do those of other species. Moreover, among several of these animals, where the entire species ruts at the same time, there comes one terrible moment of common ardor, tumult, disorder, and fighting: a moment which does not occur in the human species, where love is never cyclical. One can therefore not conclude from the fights of some animals for the possession of females that the same thing would happen to man in the state of Nature; and even if one could draw this conclusion, since such dissensions do not destroy the other species, it seems at least

reasonable that they would not be any more fatal to ours, and it is quite evident that they would still wreak less havoc in the state of nature than they do in Society, especially in Countries where Morals still count for something and the jealousy of Lovers and the vengeance of Husbands daily cause Duels, Murders, and worse; where the duty of eternal fidelity only makes for adulteries, and where even the Laws of continence and of honor inevitably increase debauchery, and multiply abortions.

[46] Let us conclude that, wandering in the forests without industry, [160] without speech, without settled abode, without war, and without tie, without any need of others of his kind and without any desire to harm them, perhaps even without ever recognizing any one of them individually, subject to few passions and self-sufficient, Savage man had only the sentiments and the enlightenment suited to this state, that he sensed only his true needs, looked only at what he believed it to be in his interest to see, and that his intelligence made no more progress than his vanity. If by chance he made some discovery, he was all the less in a position to communicate it as he did not recognize even his Children. The art perished with the inventor; there was neither education nor progress, generations multiplied uselessly; and as each one of them always started at the same point, Centuries went by in all the crudeness of the first ages, the species had already grown old, and man remained ever a child.

[47] If I have dwelt at such length on the assumption of this primitive condition, it is because, having ancient errors and inveterate prejudices to destroy, I believed I had to dig to the root, and to show in the depiction of the genuine state of Nature how far inequality, even natural inequality, is from having as much reality and influence in that state as our Writers claim.

[48] Indeed it is easy to see that, among the differences that distinguish men, several are taken to be natural although they are exclusively the result of habit and of the different kinds of life men adopt in Society. Thus a sturdy or a delicate temperament, together with the strength or the weakness that derive from it, are often due more to a tough or an effeminate upbringing than to the bodies' primitive constitution. The same is true of strengths of Mind, and education not only introduces differences between Minds that are cultivated and those that are not, but it also increases the differences that obtain between cultivated Minds in proportion to their culture;

for when a Giant and a Dwarf travel the same road, every step they take will give the Giant an added advantage. Now if one compares the prodigious variety of educations and ways of life that prevails in the different orders of the civil state with the simplicity and the uniformity of animal and savage life, where all eat the same foods, live in the same [161] fashion, and do exactly the same things, it will be evident how much smaller the difference between man and man must be in the state of Nature than in the state of society, and how much natural inequality in the human species must increase as a result of instituted inequality.

[49] But even if Nature displayed as much partiality in the distribution of its gifts as is claimed, what advantage would the more favored enjoy at the expense of the others in a state of things that allowed for almost no relations of any sort between them? Where there is no love, of what use is beauty? Of what use is wit to people who do not speak, and cunning to those who have no dealings with one another? I constantly hear it repeated that the stronger will oppress the weak; but explain to me what the word oppression here means? Some will dominate by violence, the others will groan, subject to all their whims! this is precisely what I see among us, but I do not see how the same could be said about Savage men, whom it would even be rather difficult to get to understand what subjection and domination are. A man might seize the fruits another has picked, the game he killed, the lair he used for shelter; but how will he ever succeed in getting himself obeyed by him, and what would be the chains of dependence among men who possess nothing? If I am tormented in one place, who will keep me from going somewhere else? Is there a man so superior to me in strength, and who, in addition, is so depraved, so lazy, and so ferocious as to force me to provide for his subsistence while he remains idle? He will have to make up his mind not to let me out of his sight for a single moment and to keep me very carefully tied up while he sleeps, for fear that I might escape or kill him: that is to say that he is obliged to incur willingly a great deal more trouble than he seeks to avoid and than he causes me. After all this, what if his vigilance relaxes for a moment? What if an unexpected noise make him turn his head? I take twenty steps into the forest, my chains are broken, and he never sees me again in his life.

[50] Without needlessly drawing out these details, everyone must [162] see that since ties of servitude are formed solely by men's mutual dependence and the reciprocal needs that unite them, it is impossible to subjugate a man without first having placed him in the position of being unable to do without another; a situation which, since it does not obtain in the state of Nature, leaves everyone in it free of the yoke, and renders vain the Law of the stronger.

[51] Having proved that Inequality is scarcely perceptible in the state of Nature and that its influence there is almost nil, it remains for me to show its origin and its progress through the successive developments of the human Mind. Having shown that *perfectibility*, the social virtues and the other faculties which natural man had received in potentiality could never develop by themselves, that in order to do so, they needed the fortuitous concatenation of several foreign causes which might never have arisen and without which he would eternally have remained in his primitive condition; it remains for me to consider and bring together the various contingencies that can have perfected human reason while deteriorating the species, made a being wicked by making it sociable, and from so remote a beginning finally bring man and the world to the point where we now find them.

[52] I admit that since the events I have to describe could have occurred in several ways, I can choose between them only on the basis of conjectures; but not only do such conjectures become reasons when they are the most probable that can be derived from the nature of things and the only means available to discover the truth, it also does not follow that the consequences I want to deduce from mine will therefore be conjectural since, on the principles I have just established, no other system could be formed that would not give me the same results and from which I could not draw the same conclusions.

[53] This will exempt me from expanding my reflections about how the lapse of time makes up for the slight likelihood of events; about the astonishing power of very slight causes when they act without cease; about the impossibility, on the one hand, of rejecting certain hypotheses without, on the other hand, being in a position to attach to them the certainty of facts; about how, when two facts given as real are to be connected by a sequence of intermediate facts

that are unknown or believed [163] to be so, it is up to history, if available, to provide the facts that connect them; about how, in the absence of history, it is up to Philosophy to ascertain similar facts that might connect them; finally about this, that with respect to outcomes, similarity reduces facts to a much smaller number of different classes than people imagine. It is enough for me to submit these issues for consideration to my Judges: it is enough for me to have seen to it that vulgar Readers need not consider them.

PART II

[1] The first man who, having enclosed a piece of ground, to whom it occurred to say *this is mine*, and found people sufficiently simple to believe him, was the true founder of civil society. How many crimes, wars, murders, how many miseries and horrors Mankind would have been spared by him who, pulling up the stakes or filling in the ditch, had cried out to his kind: Beware of listening to this impostor; You are lost if you forget that the fruits are everyone's and the Earth no one's: But in all likelihood things had by then reached a point where they could not continue as they were; for this idea of property, depending as it does on many prior ideas which could only arise successively, did not take shape all at once in man's mind: Much progress had to have been made, industry and enlightenment acquired, transmitted, and increased from one age to the next, before this last stage of the state of Nature was reached. Let us therefore take up the thread earlier, and try to fit this slow succession of events and of knowledge together from a single point of view, and in their most natural order.

[2] Man's first sentiment was that of his existence, his first care that for his preservation. The Earth's products provided him with all necessary support, instinct moved him to use them. Hunger, other appetites causing him by turns to experience different ways of existing, there was one that prompted him to perpetuate his species; and this blind inclination, devoid of any sentiment of the heart, produced only a purely animal act. The need satisfied, the two sexes no longer recognized one another, and even the child no longer meant anything to the Mother as soon as it could do without her.

[3] Such was the condition of nascent man; such was the life of an animal at first restricted to pure sensations, [165] and scarcely profiting from the gifts Nature offered him, let alone dreaming of wresting anything from it; but difficulties soon presented themselves; it became necessary to learn to overcome them: the height of Trees which prevented him from reaching their fruits, competition from the animals trying to eat these fruits, the ferociousness of the animals that threatened his very life, everything obliged him to attend to bodily exercise; he had to become agile, run fast, fight vigorously. The natural weapons, branches and stones, were soon