
FRANCIS BACON



DR. KALYANI VALLATH

25 YEARS OF
EXCELLENCE



FRANCIS BACON (1561-1626)

- Philosopher, scientist and essayist
 - Son of Nicholas Bacon, Lord Keeper of the Seal to Elizabeth I
 - Educated at Trinity College, Cambridge
 - Entered Gray's Inn; practised law
 - Ambitious man
 - Enjoyed the patronage of Earl of Essex
 - Became MP in 1584
 - Investigated the case against his own patron, leading to Essex's execution in 1601
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BACON'S POLITICAL CAREER

- Career bloomed during the reign of James I
 - Became Attorney General, Lord Keeper of the Seal and Lord Chancellor
 - Not popular among his peers
 - His rival Edward Coke successfully instigated a charge of corruption against him
 - Bacon was dismissed from office, debarred from Parliament, briefly imprisoned in the Tower
 - Retired into private life, devoted subsequent life to writing
 - Died of pneumonia contracted while studying the use of snow in the preservation of meat
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ESSAYS

- *The Essayes or Counsels, Civil and Moral*
 - 1597 – 10 essays
 - 1612 – 38 essays
 - 1625 – 58 essays
 - Reflections and observations in the form of advice for living a successful life
 - Wide range of topics: government, architecture, human behaviour
 - Essays show acute intelligence and wit
 - Incorporates numerous quotations from earlier writers
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THEMES OF THE ESSAYS

- Some essays are about universal concepts as truth, death, love, goodness, friendship, fortune, and praise
 - Others are about controversial matters as religion, atheism, “the True Greatness of Kingdoms and Estates,” custom and education, and usury
 - Some others consider such intriguing matters as envy, cunning, innovations, suspicion, ambition, praise, vainglory, and the vicissitudes of things
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FEATURES OF BACON'S ESSAYS

- Adopted the term “essai” from Montaigne (1580), who wrote essays on friendship, love, death, and morality
 - While Montaigne wrote the informal essay, Bacon wrote the formal
 - Practical everyday philosophy
 - Detached, epigrammatic style that present finished ideas, rather than develop and explore them
 - Later essays more expanded
 - Employs strategy of balance and opposition
 - Impersonal, objective; studies the world rather than the self
 - First writer to attend to the readers: wrote to inform young men of his class (rather than for self-expression)
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FRANCIS BACON

OF STUDIES

- Education (studies)
 - An important preoccupation of Renaissance gentlemen
 - Many philosophers and academics defined nature and scope of education
 - For the first time, the practical application of studies became recognized
 - Studies became an individual pursuit, especially with the rise of Protestantism
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WHAT ARE THE USES OF EDUCATION

- Delight (means personal, private education)
 - Ornament (means conversation with others)
 - Ability (means judgment in business and related pursuits)
 - Men with worldly experience
 - can carry out plans and understand particular circumstances
 - But men who study
 - are better able to understand important political matters and know how to deal with problems according to their severity
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HOW NOT TO USE EDUCATION

- Too much studying leads to laziness
 - If we use our knowledge too often in conversation with others, then it is showing off
 - To be guided solely by our studies is the sign of a scholar rather than a practical man
 - Moderation is the key to using education appropriately
 - Education should be supplemented by experience
 - A person's natural abilities are enhanced by education, but education without experience does not guide us in dealing with the outside world
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HOW TO USE STUDIES

- Clever (dishonest) men condemn education
 - Stupid men admire education
 - It is the wise men who use education as their real world experience dictates
 - The educated man should not
 - Use his education to argument unnecessarily with people
 - Assume that education always leads to the correct behavior or understanding
 - Should not use education merely to focus on conversation with others
 - How to use books
 - Some books should be read only in a cursory manner
 - Other books are to be read without much thought
 - A few books are to be "Chewed and Digested," that is, understood perfectly and used to guide behaviour
 - More tips on how to read books
 - Some books can be read by others, who take notes, and the notes can substitute for reading an entire book--but these books should not be those that cover important subjects.
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EFFECTS OF EDUCATION

- Reading creates a well-rounded man.
 - Conversation makes a man think quickly.
 - Writing makes a man capable of thinking with logic and reason.
 - If a man doesn't write very much, he has to have a good memory to compensate for not writing.
 - If a man doesn't exercise the art of conversation, he needs to have a quick wit.
 - If a man doesn't read very much, he has to be able to pretend that he knows more than he does.
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KINDS OF STUDIES AND THEIR USES

- History makes men wise
 - Poetry makes men clever
 - Mathematics makes men intellectually sharp
 - Logic and rhetoric make men skilled in argument
 - Studies mould character
 - There is no problem of the wit that cannot be fixed by appropriate study
 - As the right physical exercise (bowling, shooting, gentle walking, riding) cures physical illnesses (of kidneys, lungs, stomach, head)
 - If one lacks concentration, study mathematics
 - If one cannot distinguish between ideas, study the medieval philosophers (they made hair-splitting arguments)
 - If one cannot substantiate matters, study law
 - Every defect in thinking can be cured by some form of study
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OF TRUTH

- The first essay in Bacon's book of Essays
 - Renaissance spirit
 - Individual pursuit of truth as well as its practice (morality) and the rational, scientific method were Bacon's interests
 - The essay shows insight into human nature
 - It throws light on political intrigues and treachery in Jacobean court, of which Bacon was part, and which finally led to his own downfall.
 - The title, as always, simply names the matter to be discussed
 - Arresting opening
 - "What is Truth? said jesting Pilate; and would not stay for an answer."
 - We expect a sermon or scholarly discussion, but we are surprised. Bacon uses his theme as a point of departure for a discussion of the charms of lying
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SOME PEOPLE DO NOT CARE FOR TRUTH

- (When Jesus claimed that he is “witness to the truth”), Pontius Pilate, the judge at Jesus’s trial, retorted, “What is truth?”
 - Some people do not stick to truth and change their opinion frequently
 - They want freedom to act and think
 - The ancient Sceptics doubted the validity of every belief (truth)
 - Though the sceptics are now dead, some others still follow them
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WHY DO SOME PEOPLE DISLIKE TRUTH?

- The reason
 - People are naturally, but perversely, attracted to lies
 - Not only because the search for truth involves hard work
 - Not only because once found, truth curtails freedom
 - The satirist Lucian examined why men love lies
 - Poets lie to give pleasure to the reader
 - Merchants lie for material advantage
 - But why should anyone love untruth for its own sake?
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WHY DO SOME PEOPLE DISLIKE TRUTH?

- Truth is like the bright daylight and would expose the pretensions and triumphs of the world for what they are
 - It is candlelight (or untruth) that makes the pretensions and triumphs look attractive
 - Truth is like a pearl
 - It looks good in daylight and is not very expensive
 - Untruth is like a diamond or carbuncle (red gemstone)
 - They are illusory and shine in changing light; and are more expensive
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UNTRUTH IS INDEED ATTRACTIVE

- “A mixture of lie doth ever add pleasure.”
 - If “vain opinions, flattering hopes, false valuations” and “imagination” are taken out of men’s minds, many men would become “poor shrunken things”, depressed, ill and unpleasant
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POETIC UNTRUTH

- Clergymen have condemned poetry as the “wine of devils” because it fills the imagination with illusions
 - But poetic untruth is not very harmful as it just passes through the mind
 - What is harmful is lies that sink into the mind
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TRUTH IS THE GREATEST GOOD

- Only those who have experienced truth can judge the value of truth.
 - The inquiry, knowledge and the belief of truth is the greatest good of human nature.
 - Bacon compares these to stages of love: wooing, companionship (presence) and enjoying
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TRUTH IS DIVINE

- God created
 - First, the light of the senses
 - Then, the light of reason
 - Ever since, His Spirit is being diffused among mankind (in the form of truth)
 - God breathed light
 - First, into matter or chaos
 - Then, into the face of men
 - Lastly, into the face of his chosen (that is where truth resides)
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TRUTH IS DIVINE

- Lucretius said
 - It is a pleasure to stand on the shore, away from ships tossed at sea
 - It is a pleasure to stand protected at the window of a castle and see battles being waged outside
 - The greatest pleasure is to stand on pure and serene hill of Truth and see errors raging below
 - Charity, trust in God and Truth create a heaven upon earth
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TRUTH IN CIVIL BUSINESS

- Even untruthful people recognize that honest dealing denotes nobility.
 - “mixture of falsehood is like an alloy of gold and silver, which may make the metal work the better, but it embaseth it.”
 - Crooked dealings are like the workings of a serpent, a low animal that crawls on its belly.
 - The worst vice a man can have is to be false and deceitful.
 - Montaigne says, a man who lies is brave to defy God but is cowardly towards his fellow men.
 - Falsehood and treachery invite the Last Judgement of God upon all men on Doomsday.
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OF LOVE

- In his essay *Of Love*, Francis Bacon reflects on the nature of love, particularly romantic love, and its impact on human life.
 - He contrasts the portrayal of love on stage with its effects in real life.
 - Bacon argues that love is a weak passion that distracts from greater pursuits and accomplishments.
 - He asserts that love makes people lose their wisdom, as lovers think absurdly well of the person they love.
 - He emphasizes that love can lead to the loss of important things, including wealth and wisdom, as illustrated by the myth of Paris preferring Helen over the gifts of Juno and Pallas.
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THE NATURE OF LOVE

- **Love on stage vs. real life:** Bacon contrasts how love is depicted in plays as a source of comedy and tragedy, while in life it often causes mischief and harm.

"The stage is more beholding to love than the life of man."

- **Love as a weak passion:** He argues that love is a weak and distracting passion, particularly for those with great spirits or important business to attend to.

"Great spirits and great business do keep out this weak passion."

- **Love in wise and strong individuals:** Bacon acknowledges rare exceptions, like Marcus Antonius and Appius Claudius, who were overtaken by love despite their strength.

"Love can find entrance not only into an open heart, but also into a heart well fortified."

EXCESSES AND IRRATIONALITY OF LOVE

- **Love distorts judgement:** Bacon observes that love often leads to irrationality, causing people to speak and act exaggeratedly.
- Lovers flatter more than proud men.

"The lover is more. For there was never a proud man thought so absurdly well of himself as the lover doth of the person loved."

- **Impossibility of wisdom in love:** Bacon asserts that it is impossible to love and be wise simultaneously because love distorts judgment.

"It is impossible to love and to be wise."

- **Love leads to contempt if not reciprocated:** If love is not reciprocated, it often results in secret contempt from the one who is loved.
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THE DANGERS OF LOVE

- **Loss of wisdom and wealth:** Bacon warns that those who overvalue romantic affection lose more than just love itself—they lose wealth and wisdom.
 - **Love as the child of folly:** Love is often kindled in times of great prosperity or adversity, showing it to be the offspring of folly.
 - **Love and serious affairs:** Bacon advises that love should be kept separate from serious business and actions, as it can disturb one's focus and fortunes.
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TYPES OF LOVE

- **Nuptial love:** According to Bacon, nuptial or marital love is the foundation of mankind, as it is responsible for reproduction and the continuation of society.
 - **Friendly love:** He considers friendship to perfect mankind, as it adds depth and support to human life.
 - **Wanton love:** In contrast, wanton or lustful love is corrupting and debases human nature.
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OF REVENGE

- In this essay Francis Bacon explores the complex nature of revenge, discussing its moral and psychological implications.
 - Bacon asserts that while revenge is a natural human instinct, it undermines justice and law, which are essential for maintaining order in society.
 - He argues that revenge, rather than providing satisfaction or justice, ultimately harms the person seeking it, keeping their wounds fresh and preventing emotional healing.
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REVENGE AS "WILD JUSTICE"

- *"Revenge is a kind of wild justice; which the more man's nature runs to, the more ought law to weed it out."*
 - Bacon argues that revenge, though driven by human nature, is a form of "wild justice." He suggests that the more revenge is allowed to take place, the more it undermines the role of law, which should be the authority in dispensing justice.
 - Revenge disrupts the proper order of justice, as it bypasses the law. By taking matters into one's own hands, an individual becomes a judge and executioner, leading to disorder and chaos in society.
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THE ROLE OF LAW AND FORGIVENESS

- *"For as for the first wrong, it doth but offend the law; but the revenge of that wrong, putteth the law out of office."*
 - Bacon highlights that while a wrongdoer offends the law, the act of revenge completely dismisses the law's authority. Revenge displaces the power of legal systems, which are designed to provide fair and measured justice.
 - Forgiving an offense or leaving the judgment to the law shows moral superiority. Bacon emphasizes that it is the role of a wise leader or ruler, like a prince, to pardon and rise above petty revenge, demonstrating grace and power.
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REVENGE AS A PERSONAL WEAKNESS

- *“In taking revenge, a man is but even with his enemy; but in passing it over, he is superior.”*
 - Bacon points out that revenge only brings a person to the same level as their enemy, while forgiveness elevates the person who forgives, making them morally superior.
 - The desire for revenge reflects a lack of emotional control. Wisdom lies in letting go of the need for retribution and moving forward, while seeking revenge shows weakness and perpetuates conflict.
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IMPACT OF REVENGE ON THE INDIVIDUAL

- . *"This is certain, that a man that studieth revenge, keeps his own wounds green, which otherwise would heal, and do well."*
 - . Bacon explains that the pursuit of revenge prevents emotional healing. By focusing on the wrong, an individual perpetuates their own suffering, keeping their wounds "green" and preventing personal growth.
 - . Revenge keeps a person emotionally tied to the past, which hinders their ability to heal and progress. Letting go of the need for revenge allows a person to move on and ultimately find peace.
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PUBLIC VS. PRIVATE REVENGE

- Bacon distinguishes between public and private revenge, stating that public acts of revenge (like those for political figures) often have a sense of justice and are more likely to succeed.
 - Private revenge often leads to failure and misfortune.
 - Public revenge is often seen as justified, especially when done for the greater good or in a political context.
 - However, private revenge, driven by personal emotions, often backfires and causes more harm to the person seeking it.
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OF MARRIAGE AND SINGLE LIFE

"Of Marriage and Single Life," first published in 1597 and later expanded, provides a balanced, pragmatic analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of both lifestyles. Bacon argues that neither state is inherently superior, as both come with specific duties, benefits, and drawbacks.

Hostages to Fortune: Bacon famously states that "He that hath wife and children hath given hostages to fortune". This means married men are more restricted in taking risks and pursuing great, public-oriented "enterprises," as their first obligation is to their family's security.

Benefits of Single Life: Single men are viewed as better friends, masters, and servants because they are not distracted by family responsibilities. They are more likely to achieve "great works" because they can dedicate their resources and affection directly to the public.

Drawbacks of Single Life: While single men may be more charitable (due to fewer expenses), they can also be crueller and more hard-hearted because their tender feelings are not regularly exercised by family life.

The Discipline of Marriage: Marriage and children act as a "discipline of humanity," encouraging men to be more responsible, compassionate, and focused on the future.

Roles of Wives: Bacon describes the changing role of a wife throughout a man's life: "Wives are young men's mistresses; companions for middle age; and old men's nurses".

Advice on Timing: Regarding when to marry, Bacon quotes the philosopher Thales: "A young man not yet; an elder man not at all".

"Bad" Husbands and Wives: Bacon observes that harsh or "bad" husbands often have "good" wives, suggesting that this may be due to the wife's pride in her patience, or because she is trying to make good on a poor choice made against her friends' advice.

Overall, Bacon presents a nuanced, and at times patriarchal, view, analyzing how each state affects a man's ability to serve the public, his character, and his personal happiness.

THANK YOU
