

7. A Dream Of Learning

*"Poesy is as a dream of learning... but now it is time
for me to awake"*

—Francis Bacon

"The monuments of wit survive the monuments of power: the verses of a poet endure without a syllabus lost, while states and empires pass many periods". Thus wrote Francis Bacon in a masque performed in 1595. Significantly, the words are put into the mouth of a hermit, the very nickname given to Bacon by his friends at this time. Move on to *The Advancement of Learning* (1605) and the thought recurs: "The monuments of wit and learning are more durable than the monuments of power or of the hands. For have not the verses of Homer continued twenty five hundred years, or more, without the loss of a syllable, during which time infinite palaces, temples, castles, cities, have been decayed and demolished". Shakespeare transcribed the notion into verse, in Sonnet 55:

*"Not marble, nor the gilded monument,
Of Princes shall outlive this powerful rhyme".*

Hymn To The Muses

Yet it is a common misconception that Bacon had a low opinion of poetry and drama. For example, in *Explorations* (1946), L.C. Knights says: "There is never any indication that Bacon has been *moved* by poetry or that he attaches any value to its power of deepening and refining the emotions".* This complete travesty is repeated so often by English critics that it tends to sink in and is assumed to be accurate without any individual investigation of the matter. It is done in order to distance Bacon from Shakespeare: to demonstrate that the author and Bacon were quite different personalities. Yet it does not bear close examination and indeed reveals a total blindness to Bacon's writings. Simply to read him is to see why, for his prose positively drips with poetry, poetic techniques and quotations from poets, a point to which we shall return. But it isn't even true of what Bacon actually thinks of poetry, let alone the way that he himself writes.

In *The Advancement of Learning*, a work itself described by one critic as "an epic poem in prose" (Introduction to *The Advancement of Learning*, 1973, pxii. All quotations from the *Advancement* are taken from this

* L.C. Knights, 'Bacon and the Seventeenth-Century Dissociation of Sensibility', in *Explorations: Essays in Criticism Mainly on the Seventeenth Century* (1946, New York 1947 edn, p122).

edition.), poetry is treated as one of the three branches of learning, the others being history and philosophy. Moreover, at times Bacon seems to regard it as the most important. Thus in another part of the *Advancement* he writes about the benefits of learning to the state and says that: "In the time of the first two Caesars, which had the art of government in greatest perfection, there lived the best poet, Virgilius Maro; the best historiographer, Titus Livius; the best antiquary, Marcus Varro; and the best, or second orator, Marcus Cicero that to the memory are known". Here he places the poet Virgil at the top of the list and not the historian Livy or the orator Cicero. Sometimes he realises he may have gone too far in praise of poetry and backtracks a little: "I have no intention of making a hymn to the Muses, though I am of opinion that it is long since their rites were duly celebrated".

In fact, to say that Bacon never gives any indication of having been *moved* by poetry is to reveal a complete blindness to Bacon's writings, saturated as they are with poetic techniques and with quotations from poets. For someone whom poetry supposedly leaves cold, he is strangely obsessed with what they wrote and the way in which they wrote it. For Francis Bacon was inherently incapable of writing for any length of time, in any form, without using a metaphor. His letters alone positively drip of metaphors and tropes. The man habitually made connections between things and poured it out in purple prose. It is the contention of this book that it also poured from his pen into the plays we call Shakespeare.

Now, it is quite true that in the *Advancement* poetry is given a briefer formal treatment than history and philosophy, but the reason is clear. The book is designed to rescue *defective* arts and sciences from neglect, and poetry does not suffer from this failing: "In this third part of learning, which is poesy, I can report no deficiency. For being as a plant that cometh out of the lust of the earth, without a formal seed, it hath sprung up and spread abroad more than any other kind". He then goes on to contradict L.C. Knights's verdict by saying that we are more beholden to poets than to philosophers for the "expressing of affections, passions, corruptions". We are then told by orthodox critics that, sure, Bacon did admire and even love ancient poets like Ovid and Virgil, but he was totally insensitive to the great poetry, especially that of Shakespeare, all around him. Why, then, should he believe that contemporary poetry 'had no deficiency'—in other words, was flourishing? And why did he have so many friends who were poets, many of them also friends of Shakespeare? Of course, if Bacon wrote Shakespeare, then he was only too well aware of this absence of 'deficiency' and further explanation would entail revelations he did not wish to make.

Feigned History

In order to understand fully what Bacon says about the role of poetry, we need to refer to a number of works, notably *The Wisdom of the Ancients* (1609) and *The Advancement of Learning* (1605). Starting with the latter, he says that poetry is nothing else but 'feigned history' and then gives an explanation of its function which is worth quoting at length:

"The use of this feigned history hath been to give some shadow of satisfaction to the mind of man in those points wherein the nature of things doth deny it, the world being in proportion inferior to the soul; by reason whereof there is, agreeable to the spirit of man, a more ample greatness, a more exact goodness, and a more absolute variety, than can be found in the nature of things. Therefore, because the acts or events of true history have not that magnitude which satisfieth the mind of man, poesy feigneth acts and events greater and more heroical: because true history propoundeth the successes and issues of actions not so agreeable to the merits of virtue and vice, therefore poesy feigns them more just in retribution, and more according to revealed providence: because true history representeth actions and events more ordinary, and less interchanged, therefore poesy endueth them with more rareness, and more unexpected and alternative variations: so as it appeareth that poesy serveth and conferreth to magnanimity, morality, and to delectation. And therefore it was ever thought to have some participation of divineness, because it doth raise and erect the mind, by submitting the shows of things to the desires of the mind; whereas reason doth buckle and bow the mind into the nature of things. And we see, that by these insinuations and congruities with man's nature and pleasure, joined also with the agreement and comfort it hath with music, it hath access and estimation in rude times and barbarous regions, where other learning stood excluded..."

So, according to Bacon, poetic drama, or 'feigned history', depicts a 'more ample greatness, a more exact goodness, and a more absolute variety' than man can discover in nature and therefore it satisfies our desire for order. By representing an ideal pattern of behaviour, it helps to stimulate man to strive for goodness. This idea of poetry as partly a moral stimulant was hardly new. Much of what Bacon says was foreshadowed by Sidney ten years earlier in his *Apology for Poetry*. Sidney asserts that it is the "most familiar" to teach virtue and makes the famous dichotomy between the golden world of poetry and the brazen world of fact. Sidney also claims that it helps us "to know, and by knowledge to lift up the mind from the dungeon of the body to the enjoying his own divine essence". Bacon echoes Sidney's assertions, for example, in saying that poetry has "some participation of divineness, because it doth raise and erect the mind, by submitting the shows of things to the desires of the mind;

whereas reason doth buckle and bow the mind into the nature of things".

Bacon has a lot to say about rhetoric in the *Advancement* where he relates it to poetry and drama. Of course, poetic drama combines both poetry and rhetoric: in Shakespeare especially, rhetoric has a crucial role because so many of the memorable speeches are in fact oratorical performances. After informing us that rhetoric is "a science excellent, and excellently well laboured", he then proceeds to define its function: "The duty and office of rhetoric is, to apply reason to imagination for the better moving of the will". He also calls it "imaginative or insinuating reason". Rhetoric therefore presents the conclusions of reason in images which by their persuasive power force us to agree to the proposition or act in the desired way. Naturally, he insists that rhetoric should be used responsibly: "The end of rhetoric is to fill the imagination to second reason, and not to oppress it". It will succeed if it contracts "a confederacy between reason and the imagination against the affections".

After quoting from Plato that virtue, if she could be seen, would move great love and affection, Bacon adds: "Seeing that she cannot be showed to the sense by corporal shape, the next degree is to show her to the imagination in lively representation". This must be a reference to drama, an interpretation which is verified in Chapter 22. He has been noting that moral philosophers have succeeded admirably in describing the virtues, but they have failed miserably in teaching us how to cultivate them. Virtuous behaviour requires initially a much deeper and richer knowledge of the characters, feelings and actions of man than the moral philosophers provide. We must, he says, be made aware of the ways in which people actually behave in the real world. Here he summons the aid of poets and historians:

"But the poets and writers of histories are the best doctors of this knowledge; where we may find painted forth with great life, how affections are kindled and incited; and how pacified and refrained; and how again contained from act and further degree; how they disclose themselves; how they work; how they vary; how they gather and fortify; how they are inwrapped one with another; and how they do fight and encounter one with another; and other the like particularities; amongst the which this last is of special use in moral and civil matters; how, I say, to set affection against affection, and to master one by another; even as we use to hunt beast with beast, and fly bird with bird, which otherwise perchance we could not so easily recover; upon which foundation is erected that excellent use of praemium and poena, whereby civil states consist; employing the predominant affections of fear and hope, for the suppressing and bridling the rest. For as in the government of states it is sometimes necessary to bridle one faction with another, so it is in the government within".

Here Bacon is advocating the same role for poetry as that which he suggested for rhetoric. Moreover, both provide a field of extended experience from which humanity can learn to master his conflicting passions and desires—poetry and drama as catharsis. It goes without saying that Shakespeare apparently shared this view, for he conducted a poetic exploration of experience which is unequalled for both depth and range in literary history.

Bacon actually implies that the use of poetry and drama is the inductive method as applied to ethics. In *Novum Organum* he tells us: "I form a history and tables" for human emotions as much as for "natural philosophy". Where, then, is Bacon's inductive sourcebook for the social sciences? Is it in the Shakespeare plays?

In *De Augmentis*, the extended and latinised version of the *Advancement* published in the same year as the *First Folio*, Bacon expands his discussion of drama and includes the following passage:

"Dramatic poetry, which has the theatre for its world, would be of excellent use if well directed. For the stage is capable of no small influence both of discipline and corruption. Now for corruption in this kind we have enough; but the discipline in our time has been plainly neglected... yet among the ancients it was the means of educating men's minds to virtue".

This notion that drama provides insights into human nature from which we can learn virtue is precisely echoed by Hamlet in his advice to the players, in Act 3 Scene 2 of the play: "the purpose of playing, whose end both at the first and now, was and is to hold as 'twere the mirror up to nature, to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure". Bacon says of drama that 'among the ancients it was the means of educating men's minds to virtue' and of rhetoric that it shows virtue 'to the imagination in lively representation'; while Hamlet says that 'both at the first and now' its purpose is to 'show virtue her feature'. In another part of *De Augmentis* Bacon says that "the political glass is nothing but the state of the world and times wherein we live"; while Hamlet says that the "mirror" will show "the very age and body of the time his form and pressure" Clearly, therefore, Bacon's conception of the role of drama is not only identical to that of Hamlet but is also expressed in similar words.

Philosophy Personified

At the end of the passage on dramatic poetry just quoted, Bacon claims that drama is a uniquely effective method of popular education, owing to "one of the great secrets of nature, that the minds of men are more open to

impressions and affections when they are gathered together than when they are alone". The overwhelming desire to educate occupied Francis Bacon throughout his life. If he explicitly states that drama is a particularly effective medium for achieving this end, then the question has to be asked whether he did, indeed, use it. An examination of all his various works reveals that he certainly employed a variety of presentation methods in order to appeal to different types of reader.

In *The Masculine Birth of Time*, written about 1603, Bacon argues that in order to communicate knowledge effectively "a new method must be found", which will allow for "quiet entry into minds so choked and overgrown" by centuries of error that they do not grasp the truth in its pure form. Since the "human understanding is no dry light" the philosopher who wants to communicate his ideas must accept and exploit the fact that understanding is subject to "a fusion of the will and affections". The use of imagination is thus necessary as a means of proving and demonstrating the meaning of experience. The philosopher must "beguile" his audience with art. In this way his method will have in it "an inherent power of winning support". To what sort of art is he referring?

The answer is provided in *The Wisdom of the Ancients*, published in 1609.* Here Bacon justifies the use of parables because they lead "the understanding of man by an easy and gentle passage through all novel and abstruse inventions which any way differ from common received opinions". After all, parables actually preceded arguments: "as hieroglyphics preceded letters, so parables were more ancient than arguments". He then adds that "in these days also, he that would illuminate men's minds anew in any old matter, and that not with disprofit, must absolutely take the same course, and use the help of similes". In such passages Bacon is emphasising his view that "paraboliical poetry", as he calls it, provides one method of presenting unorthodox views to a reluctant audience. It is also interesting that *The Wisdom of the Ancients* was written at precisely the time that Shakespeare turned to romance and the fairy tale, indeed to the very medium of parable that Bacon elucidates in this work. Again, the chronology of development is the same. Early in his career Bacon had rejected the parable as unsuitable, but by 1609 he had fully accepted it as a vehicle for both the presentation and preservation of philosophy. Shakespeare, too, would appear to have followed this course.

Of particular note in the *Wisdom* is Bacon's discussion of the myth of Orpheus. We know that it had a strong appeal for him because he erected a

* All quotations from *The Wisdom of the Ancients* are taken from the translation by Arthur Gorges published, for example, in *The Essays, the Wisdom of the Ancients and the New Atlantis*, Odhams Press, 1940.

statue of Orpheus in his orchard at Gorhambury as 'Philosophy Personified', thus taking him as his model. The intriguing question is why he should interpret Orpheus in terms of philosophy. The answer has to do with music: "the person of Orpheus is truly divine, and his mastership of harmony and music that drew all things to follow him, may surely be taken as philosophy personified". But what is 'musical' about philosophy? The answer is quite clear in view of our entire discussion of Bacon's theory of communication. It lies in the philosopher's use of the poetic method. To persuade his public, the philosopher must also be a poet.

According to Francis Bacon, the union of poetry and philosophy produces an imaginative power so strong that it can alter the mind and even influence bodies and objects: "So great was the power of his music that even the trees and the stones came to his bidding and arranged themselves in order about him". He continues by providing the 'meaning' of the fable: "The song of Orpheus is twofold, pacifying the spirits of the Underworld and charming the beasts and trees. The former relates to Natural Philosophy, the latter to Moral and Civil Philosophy". And in terms of the latter, philosophy uses "persuasion and eloquence to insinuate into men's minds the love of virtue and equity and peace". As Orpheus tunes his music to the ears of his audience so he seems to take on different guises to suit each occasion.

Francis is also concerned to show that the power created by the union of poetry and philosophy can be destroyed, just as the music of Orpheus was drowned by the "horrible and strange" noise produced by the Thracian women with their cornets. He says that the works of wisdom "meet with their periods". Tumults, seditions and wars cause men to "return to the depravity of their natures", and fields and towns are wasted and depopulated. Learning and philosophy are also inevitably "dismembered". This notion that culture is continually under threat is also found in a lovely passage in the *Advancement*, where he again invokes Orpheus and again stresses the fickle nature of civilisation and the human mind:

"Neither is certainly that other great merit of learning, in repressing the inconveniences which grow from man to man, much inferior to the former, of relieving the necessities which arise from nature; which merit was lively set forth by the ancients in that feigned relation of Orpheus' theatre, where all beasts and birds assembled; and, forgetting their several appetites, some of prey, some of game, some of quarrel, stood all sociably together listening to the airs and accords of the harp; the sound whereof no sooner ceased, or was drowned by some louder noise, but every beast returned to its own nature: wherein is aptly described the nature and condition of men, who are full of savage and unreclaimed desires of profit, of lust, of revenge; which as long as they give ear to

precepts, to laws, to religion, sweetly touched with eloquence and persuasion of book, of sermons, of harangues, so long is society and peace maintained; but if these instruments be silent, or that sedition and tumult make them not audible, all things dissolve into anarchy and confusion".

Shakespeare is also interested in the Orphic myth. It is only in its terms that *The Tempest*, for example, can be fully understood. The very name Prospero is similar to that of Orpheus, the first three letters being the same in reverse. Of course, *'spero'* is Latin for 'I hope', and the author is surely expressing Bacon's hope that the union of poetry and philosophy will triumph over the 'depravity of men's natures' (the tempest of the soul, if you like) by insinuating into their minds 'the love of virtue and equity and peace'. Again, in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (3:2) we are told:

*"For Orpheus' lute was strong with poets' sinews;
Whose golden touch could soften steel and stones.
Make tigers tame and huge leviathans
Forsake unsounded deeps to dance on sands".*

Elizabeth Sewall in her book *The Orphic Voice* (1960) commenting on both Bacon's and Shakespeare's visions of Orpheus, says that "each writer identifies himself—as he sees himself—with Orpheus. To the poet, Orpheus' instrument is the poet's body. To the philosopher, Orpheus is the embodiment of philosophy" (p59). This is not quite correct and is based on a false dichotomy. Bacon identifies himself with Orpheus because he sees himself as both a philosopher AND a poet. Shakespeare, as Prospero, does the same.

Those who believe that Bacon thought little of poetry and drama have clearly not read his works or wilfully misunderstood them. Their judgments receive superficial support from one or two ironical statements which he does make. One such remark occurs at the end of his chapter on poetry in the *Advancement*. He says that "it is not good to stay too long in the theatre". But not good for whom? This is surely a self-criticism: he must not allow himself to be totally seduced by his own imagination. This interpretation is reinforced by his revised ending to this chapter in *De Augmentis*. The controversial sentence is omitted, and instead we are given both a supremely poetic definition of poetry and a supremely poetical 'abandonment' of it: "Poesy is as a dream of learning; a thing sweet and varied, and that would be thought to have in it something divine; a character which dreams likewise affect. But now it is time for me to awake, and, rising above the earth, to wing my way through the clear air of philosophy and the sciences". Here he implies that he himself has been in the dream. But does he really want to awake? For he moves on to

philosophy with sheer poetry, 'rising above the earth' and 'winging' his way 'through the clear air'.

The Tenth Muse

The clearest proof of Bacon's high regard for poetry is that he wrote it. That Bacon WAS a poet is not just a matter of his poetic prose. That was how the likes of Shelley and Hazlitt saw it. Shelley, of course, declared that "Lord Bacon was a poet". Hazlitt put it thus: "He united the powers of imagination and reason to a greater degree than almost any other writer. He was one of the strongest instances of those men who by the privilege of their nature are at once poets and philosophers, and see equally into both worlds". Both these perceptive comments are based on reflection on Bacon's prose.

Contemporaries saw it differently, Bacon himself included. Of course, he never openly admitted to being a poet. Indeed, an interesting statement occurs in the *Apology* which he wrote as a justification of the Queen's action in regard to the treasonable plot which cost Essex his life. He says: "It happened a little before that time that Her Majesty had a purpose to dine at Twickenham Park, at which time I had—though I profess not to be a poet—prepared a sonnet directly tending and alluding to draw on Her Majesty's reconciliation to my Lord; which I remember I also showed to a great person". In view of his habit of using words in their original Latin meaning, it is clear that when he says in parenthesis, "though I profess not to be a poet", he means, "though I do not make open profession of being a poet". (Essex himself, in a letter to Bacon in 1600, writes: "I am a stranger to all poetical conceits, or else I would say somewhat of your poetical example".)

That this is precisely the meaning is verified by another remark he makes at the end of a letter. When James was journeying from Scotland to London in 1603 to ascend the throne of England, Bacon wrote to Sir John Davies, who had gone some way out of London to meet and escort the king. Davies, who wrote *Orchestra*, a poem to which Francis alludes in his *History of the Winds*, was a friend of Bacon's. In the letter Bacon asks his fellow poet to commend him to his majesty and ends with the words, "So, desiring you to be good to concealed poets...". He doesn't say: "be good to impoverished barristers" or "be good to loyal politicians". Instead, he describes himself as a 'concealed' poet. In his *Brief Lives* Aubrey repeats the description: "His lordship was a good poet, but concealed, as appears by his letters". Perhaps Bacon used the phrase more than once, but the letter to Davies contains the only reference that has survived.

The only acknowledged poetry of Bacon that has survived are his verse

translations of seven of the psalms, written towards the end of his life during the enforced leisure of a severe illness. It is sometimes suggested that their poor quality disqualifies Bacon from being a great poet. However, if we were to judge Milton solely on the basis of his translations of the psalms, then we would have to conclude that he was even worse, for Bacon's efforts in this difficult task are definitely superior to his. Sir Philip Sidney's verse translations are even worse than Milton's!

Then there is the evidence of the *Manes Verulamiani*. When great men died the poets and scholars customarily paid homage to his memory in verses of eulogy. When William of Stratford died not a single eulogy appeared, though on Ben Jonson's death numerous tributes poured forth from his friends and admirers. Similarly, within a few months of Bacon's death in April 1626 his admirers joined in a chorus of praise of his achievements. His secretary Rawley published a selection of thirty-two of them, and they were reprinted in 1730 under the title *Manes Verulamiani*. The contributors, all of whom wrote in Latin, were contemporary scholars and either Fellows of University Colleges or Members of the Inns of Court. (These eulogies can be read at" <http://home.att.net/~tleary/manes2.htm> .)

Twenty-seven of the thirty-two poems refer to Bacon as a poet and dramatist. Poem 2 describes him as Muse more rare than the nine Muses. Poem 12 by John Williams, chaplain to James I and Bishop of Lincoln, says that he was "Apollo, the leader of our choir". Poem 20 praises him as "the tenth Muse and the glory of the choir". Another refers to him as "the morning star of the Muses". Eulogy 9 describes Bacon as "the sinews of wit, the marrow of persuasion, the Tagus of Eloquence, the precious gem of recondite literature". The word 'recondite' (Latin '*reconditarum literarum*') means both 'profound' and 'hidden'. This notion of concealment recurs in another eulogy, which states: "At length, we ask him, 'Who art thou?' For he walks not every day showing the same face". Poem 4 claims that he not only united philosophy and drama but that he restored it through comedies and tragedies: "Nor did he with workmanship of fussy meddlars patch, but he renovated her walking slowly in the shoes of comedy. Then with more polished art he rose on the loftier tragic buckskin".

Three more tributes call for comment. Poem 22 by James Dupont states that Bacon had "showered the age with crowds of books", and poem 24 says that "thou hast filled the world with thy writings and the ages with thy glory". These remarks are curious because Bacon's acknowledged writings would almost go into a pocket. Allowing for some degree of exaggeration, it is now apparent that he must have been the author of a good deal of literature apart from the works to which his name is attached. That the writers seem eager to impart some momentous secret but ultimately vowed

to hold back is also suggested by the couplet of one tribute which translates: "Thou alone, who darest to weave together these hanging threads, shalt know whom these memorials enshrine"?

The Great Renewal

Bacon called his lifelong literary endeavour 'The Great Instauration', which means 'renewal'. It was basically a programme for reforming and advancing learning in order to bring "relief to man's estate"—a mission, as he saw it, to restore the wisdom of the ancients, to win back the dominion over nature which was lost at the Fall. He felt that if this restoration was attempted with the old methods then the prospect would be dark indeed. Our intellectual powers are no greater than those of the ancients; our only advantage over them is in the additional experience which has accumulated in two thousand years. And we cannot be more diligent than the alchemists and magicians who devoted their lives to the furnace and the crucible. Our only hope is to devise a new method which shall be to the mind as rulers and compasses are to the hand. In Bacon's view the mere rationalists are like spiders who spin wonderful but flimsy webs out of their own bodies; the mere empiricists are like ants who collect raw materials without selection and store them up without modification. True and fruitful science must combine rationalism with empiricism, and be like the bee who gathers materials from every flower and then works them up by her own activities into honey. This marriage between rationalism and empiricism, and this discovery of a new method, were the tasks which Bacon set before himself. The times were peculiarly favourable, and he felt that he had the necessary qualifications.

In the beautiful preface to *The Great Instauration* Bacon states his credentials:

"For my own part at least, in obedience to the everlasting love of truth, I have committed myself to the uncertainties and difficulties and solitudes of the ways and, relying on the divine assistance, have upheld my mind both against the shocks and embattled ranks of opinion, and against my own private and inward hesitations and scruples, and against fogs and clouds of nature, and the phantoms flitting about on every side, in the hope of providing at last for the present and future generations guidance more faithful and secure..."

A little further on, he describes his own method:

"And the same humility which I use in inventing I employ likewise in teaching. For I do not endeavour either by triumphs of confutation, or pleading of antiquity, or assumption of authority, or even by the veil of obscurity, to invest these inventions of mine with any majesty; which

might easily be done by one who sought to give lustre to his own name rather than light to other men's minds, I have not sought (I say) nor do I seek either to force or ensnare men's judgments, but I lead them to things themselves and the concordance of things, that they may see for themselves what they have, and what they can dispute, what they can add and contribute to the common stock".

Now this is a very intriguing statement. To what inventions is he referring? Why does he use humility in inventing? And what might be the 'veil of obscurity'? Shakespeare, after all, describes *Venus and Adonis* as "the first heir of my invention". And in sonnet 76 he asks:

*"Why write I all still one, ever the same,
And keep invention in a noted weed".*

Generally in those days the word *invention* meant imagination, creativity, created work or poem, and indeed it was usually employed in the context of poetry. Thus in 1578 an anthology of poems appeared with the title *A Gorgeous Gallery of Gallant Inventions*. Sidney's first sonnet in *Atrophil and Stella* includes these lines:

*"Studying inventions fine, her wits to entertain:
Oft turning others' leaves, to see if thence would flow
Some fresh and fruitful showers upon my sunburned brain.
But words came halting forth, wanting Invention's stay,
Invention Nature's child, fled step-dame Study's blows".*

'Invention' is used here as a unique aspect of the poet's mind. Shakespeare in fact uses the word on several occasions in a context of literary composition, when he refers to a writer's imagination or his innate gift for writing or his created works. What, then, are the inventions of Francis Bacon which he uses to give light to other men's minds rather than lustre to his own name, works which might appear under a 'veil of obscurity'?

Idols of the Theatre

But I digress a little. Bacon says that there are fallacies which block or distort our perception of reality and the pursuit of truth. They are effectively psychological barriers—pre-possessions, prejudices, and delusions, emotional and sentimental biases. In short, they include all the imaginings which prevent men from seeing the object as it really is. If we want to acquire knowledge, we have to free our minds from these 'idols', as he calls them. He had alluded to them in the *Advancement*:

"There is yet a much more important and profound kind of fallacies in the mind of man, which I find not observed or enquired at all, and think good to place here, as that which of all others appertaineth most to rectify

judgment: the force whereof is such, as it doth not dazzle or snare the understanding in some particulars, but doth more generally and inwardly infect and corrupt the state thereof. For the mind of man is far from the nature of a clear and equal glass, wherein the beams of things should reflect according to their true incidence, nay, it is rather like an enchanted glass, full of superstition and imposture, if it be not delivered and reduced. For this purpose, let us consider the false appearances that are imposed upon us by the general nature of the mind..."

In his doctrine of the Idols, Bacon points out various tendencies toward error, what we today call 'cognitive biases' that should either be avoided, or corrected where complete avoidance is impossible. There are four classes of Idols which beset men's minds:

"The Idols of the Tribe have their foundation in human nature itself, and in the tribe or race of men. For it is a false assertion that the sense of man is the measure of things. On the contrary, all perceptions as well of the sense as of the mind are according to the measure of the individual and not according to the measure of the universe. And the human understanding is like a false mirror, which, receiving rays irregularly, distorts and discolours the nature of things by mingling its own nature with it.

"The Idols of the Cave are the idols of the individual man. For everyone (besides the errors common to human nature in general) has a cave or den of his own, which refracts and discolours the light of nature, owing either to his own proper and peculiar nature; or to his education and conversation with others; or to the reading of books, and the authority of those whom he esteems and admires; or to the differences of impressions, accordingly as they take place in a mind preoccupied and predisposed or in a mind indifferent and settled; or the like. So that the spirit of man (according as it is meted out to different individuals) is in fact a thing variable and full of perturbation, and governed as it were by chance..."

"There are also Idols formed by the intercourse and association of men with each other, which I call Idols of the Market Place, on account of the commerce and consort of men there. For it is by discourse that men associate, and words are imposed according to the apprehension of the vulgar. And therefore the ill and unfit choice of words wonderfully obstructs the understanding. Nor do the definitions or explanations wherewith in some things learned men are wont to guard and defend themselves, by any means set the matter right. But words plainly force and overrule the understanding, and throw all into confusion, and lead men away into numberless empty controversies and idle fancies.

"Lastly, there are Idols which have immigrated into men's minds from the various dogmas of philosophies, and also from wrong laws of

demonstration. These I call Idols of the Theatre, because in my judgment all the received systems are but so many stage plays, representing worlds of their own creation after an unreal and scenic fashion. Nor is it only of the systems now in vogue, or only of the ancient sects and philosophies, that I speak; for many more plays of the same kind may yet be composed and in like artificial manner set forth; seeing that errors the most widely different have nevertheless causes for the most part alike. Neither again do I mean this only of entire systems, but also of many principles and axioms in science, which by tradition, credulity, and negligence have come to be received..."

It is very intriguing that he should refer to dogmatic philosophy in terms of idols of the theatre. For Bacon, as for Shakespeare, the theatre is a metaphor for the world. Of course, in this metaphor he is also bringing philosophy and drama together. Perhaps he is hinting that he is trying to defeat these dogmatic systems by theatrical means—by creating a new body of drama which eschews dogmatic philosophy in favour of a more open, objective and sceptical approach to the world and its problems. By using plays to combat the 'idols of the theatre' he is, in effect, practising the negative capability which Keats believed the playwright possessed so enormously—that state in which he was "capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason".

The Ladder Of The Intellect

In 1620 he wrote a *Distributio Operis*, or Plan of the Work. He tells us that his great renewal falls into six parts, each of which is presented differently just as the content differs from that of the other parts. Part I is the 'Division of the Sciences', comprising a panoramic view of the whole field of human knowledge with special emphasis on the defective parts. This part could be taken from the *Advancement* and *De Augmentis*. Since this was the first step, enticing readers further, its presentation had to be structured in an appealing form. In the plan he describes the manner as a "coasting voyage along the shores of the arts and sciences" The first book of the *Advancement* has frequently been described as modelled on a classical oration, while in his introduction to a 1973 edition Arthur Johnston calls the whole work "an epic poem in prose". Whether a masterly piece of rhetoric or an epic poem, it is clearly a work in which Bacon employs all the conventional devices of the poet and dramatist in order to make a radical proposal for reform.

Bacon calls the second part of his 'Great Instauration' the 'New Organon', or 'Directions Concerning the Interpretation of Nature'. He says: "It belongs to the doctrine concerning the better and more perfect use of human

reason". It develops Bacon's new method for scientific investigation, the *Novum Organum*, equipping the intellect to pass beyond ancient arts and thus producing a radical revision of the methods of knowledge; but it also introduces a new epistemology and a new ontology. Bacon calls his new art *Interpretatio Naturae*, which is a logic of research going beyond ordinary logic, since his science aims at three inventions: of arts (not arguments), of principles (not of things in accordance to principles), and of designations and directions for works (not of probable reasons). The effect Bacon looks for is to command nature in action, not to overcome an opponent in argument. The *Novum Organum* is the only part of the *Instauratio Magna* which was brought near to completion. As always, poetic techniques saturate the work. The points are made in a series of aphorisms, each of which forms a picture of some kind.

The third part he calls the 'Phenomena of the Universe'. Here he aims to provide some natural and experimental histories as a preparation for the new philosophy. The materials are to be arranged not to delight or persuade, like goods in a shop, but "to take up as little room as possible in the warehouse". He completed fragments of this part in works such as *The History of the Winds*, *The History of Life and Death* and *History of Dense and Rare*. According to *De Augmentis Scientiarum*, natural history is split up into narrative and inductive, the latter of which is supposed "to minister and be in order to the *building up of Philosophy*". These functional histories support human memory and provide the *material for research*, or the factual knowledge of nature, which must be certain and reliable. Natural history starts from and emphasises the subtlety of nature or her structural intricacy, but not the complexity of philosophical systems, since they have been produced by the human mind. Bacon sees this part of *Instauratio Magna* as a foundation for the reconstruction of the sciences in order to produce physical and metaphysical knowledge. Nature in this context is studied under experimental conditions, not only in the sense of the history of bodies, but also as a history of virtues or original passions, which refer to the desires of matter. This knowledge was regarded by Bacon as a preparation for Part 6, the *Second Philosophy* or *Active Science*, for which he gave only the one example of *Historia Ventorum* (1622); but—following his plan to compose six prototypical natural histories—he also wrote *Historia vitae et mortis* (1623) and the *Historia densi*, which was left in manuscript. The text, which develops the idea of Part 3, is called *Parasceve ad Historiam Naturalem et Experimentalem*.

We shall come to the fourth part in a moment. Part 5 is called 'Forerunners or Anticipations of the New Philosophy'. Here tentative conclusions will be made as forerunners to genuine axioms. He says that

"the fifth part is for temporary use only, pending the completion of the rest", and includes "such things as I have myself discovered, proved or added—not however according to the true rules and methods of interpretation, but by the ordinary use of the understanding in inquiring and discovering". He adds that "they are conclusions by which... I do not at all mean to bind myself". He seems to be saying that this fifth part comprises his own casual, personal observations and as temporary are not meant for publication. For this part of the *Great Instauration*, texts are planned that draw philosophical conclusions from collections of facts which are not yet sufficient for the use or application of Bacon's inductive method.

Of the last part of the Great Instauration, Bacon says:

"The sixth part of my work (to which the rest is subservient and ministrant) discloses and sets forth that philosophy which by the legitimate, chaste, and severe course of inquiry which I have explained and provided is at length developed and established. The completion however of this last part is a thing both above my strength and beyond my hopes. I have made a beginning of the work—a beginning, as I hope, not unimportant: the fortune of the human race will give the issue".

He calls this final part the 'New Philosophy, or Active Science'.

But what of the fourth part? It is mysteriously and poetically called the 'Ladder of the Intellect':

"And now that we have surrounded the intellect with faithful helps and guards, and got together with most careful selection a regular army of divine works, it may seem that we have no more to do but to proceed to philosophy itself. And yet in a matter so difficult and doubtful there are still some things which it seems necessary to premise, partly for convenience of explanation, partly for present use. Of these the first is to set forth examples of inquiry and invention according to my method, exhibited by anticipation in some particular subjects; choosing such subjects as are at once the most noble in themselves among those under inquiry, and most different one from another; that there may be an example in every kind... I mean actual types and models, by which the entire process of the mind and the whole fabric and order of invention from the beginning to the end, in certain subjects, and those various and remarkable, should be set as it were before the eyes... To examples of this kind—being in fact nothing more than an application of the second part in detail and at large—the fourth part of the work is devoted".

According to many writers, this Fourth Part did not exist. Thus in a lecture on Bacon's philosophy delivered in 1926 C.D. Broad says:

"Part IV, called the *Ladder of the Intellect*, was to consist of a number of fully worked-out examples of the application of the method. They

were to be so chosen that the subject-matter of each should be intrinsically important, and that between them they should illustrate the use of the method in very varied media. Of this nothing is extant but a short preface. It is important to remember that we have no complete example of Bacon's method" (*The Philosophy of Francis Bacon*, 1926).

However, since the second part outlines the inductive method, or "directions concerning the interpretation of nature", this fourth part must include the sourcebook for the social sciences, the "history and tables for anger, fear, shame" and the like that he talks about in the *Novum Organum*, the second part of the Instauration. And this inductive method must be drama because he says explicitly that it includes 'actual types and models', by which the process of the mind is 'set as it were before the eyes'. We should also note his statement that 'to examples of this kind... the fourth part is dedicated'. In discussing all the parts he gives some indication of the amount of work he has actually done. Here he merely uses the words 'is dedicated'. This suggests that he has completed at least much of the part. But where is the fourth part of Bacon's Great Instauration? Is it the Shakespeare works?

It was a German, August Wilhelm Schlegel, who in his *Lectures on Dramatic Art* (1809-11) offered one of the most penetrating descriptions of Shakespeare's plays. The following is a translation of a passage which almost adopts the words Bacon uses in the foregoing passages as to the scope and object of the fourth part of his 'Great Instauration':

"Never perhaps was there so comprehensive a talent for characterization as Shakspeare. It not only grasps every diversity of rank, age, and sex, down to the lisping of infancy; not only do the king and the beggar, the hero and the pickpocket, the sage and the idiot, speak and act with equal truthfulness; not only does he transport himself to distant ages and foreign nations, and portray with the greatest accuracy (a few apparent violations of costume excepted) the spirit of the ancient Romans, of the French in the wars with the English, of the English themselves during a great part of their history, of the Southern Europeans (in the serious part of many comedies), the cultivated society of the day, and the rude barbarism of a Norman fore-time; his human characters have not only such depth and individuality that they do not admit of being classed under common names, and are inexhaustible even in conception: no, this Prometheus not merely forms men, he opens the gates of the magical world of spirits, calls up the midnight ghost, exhibits before us the witches with their unhallowed rites, peoples the air with sportive fairies and sylphs; and these beings, though existing only in the imagination, nevertheless possess such truth and consistency, that even with such misshapen abortions as Caliban, he extorts the assenting conviction, that

were there such beings they would so conduct themselves. In a word, as he carries a bold and pregnant fancy into the kingdom of nature, on the other hand, he carries nature into the regions of fancy, which lie beyond the confines of reality. We are lost in astonishment at the close intimacy he brings us into with the extraordinary, the wonderful, and the unheard-of..." (see lecture 23, which can be read at: <http://www.fullbooks.com/Lectures-on-Dramatic-Art7.html> .)

What we have seen is that Francis Bacon gave to poetry and drama crucial roles in his philosophy, that he was a concealed poet himself, and that in the opinion of some contemporaries his poetry was of a very high order indeed. Finally, the Shakespeare enterprise fits perfectly into Bacon's great plan for the advancement of learning and knowledge.