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Ressort: Special interest

Francis Bacon (1561 ? 1626)

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Francis Bacon (1561 – 1626) We must obey the forces we want to command – natura non nisi parendo viricitus.

What is the meaning of the quotation? Bacon advises us to look at the nature, the real world how it exists, in the way it is palpable for us, how it is measurable.

There is the real world not only ideas and some kind of mirrored picture which is not reliable and is blurred and biased like Plato or other philosophers have stated. Bacon follows a non-metaphysical approach. For Bacon the reality is an object for scrutinizing and for investigation. He proclaims the necessity to find the best methods to work out the root causes of effects and the laws of the nature. The methods are based on definitions of the right terms, axioms. Next step is to do the induction. It is about make conclusions based on the facts you have found.

It is a huge progress to build up a theory by collecting examples and evidence through empirical facts.

This quotation is important to understand the new approach. In the The Great Instauration he specifies what induction is.

The key concepts are the experience and the formulation of hypothesis which should be verified or refuted. Bacons citation “We must obey the forces we want to command” is like a ruse. In scrutinizing the nature you get the power of the nature. An example is in understanding the power of water you can apply a water mill and milling the grain. The generation of power from water heat as it was used in the steam machine two centuries later led to the industrial revolution and brought prosperity to a great part of the mankind. If you understand electricity, you can daylighting the night.

This simple statement of Bacon explains the power of the forces of the nature, if you follow the rules and obey them in the first stage. Later on you can transform the nature with your gained insights and ripe the fruits out of it.

Exciting is as well the insight of Bacon related to the knowledge of the biases we face in terms of our perception. He explained us some wise knowledge about bias in perception and we can see the link to the insights of the social psychology of today.

“There are four classes of Idols which beset men’s minds. To these for distinction’s sake I have assigned names, calling the first class Idol of the Tribe; the second, Idols of the Cave; the third, Idols of the Market Place; the fourth, Idols of the Theater.”

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He explains the classical theories of the deception and falsities of human being. You are entrenched by your biographical background. Here in the quotation, it is the tribe.

The next bias is known in the philosophy – the issue of the possibility to get knowledge about the real world. We are human beings and therefore we interpret the world. The followers of the critical thinking were e.g. Descartes and Kant in the century of the enlightenment and afterwards.

The last bias must be overcome. With the theatre he emphasizes that religion and science must be separated. We see here again that it was the era of the conquest of the natural science over the religion.

The materialism was born, and the ties of the religion had to be loosened that the capitalism could blossom. One historical indication of the change of the world was e. g. the opening of the stock exchange in London at the time Bacon was living. The industry wanted to apply mechanics in the mining like pump technic and hydraulic. Therefore, no hindering of the science was accepted by the new forces of the capital.

Bacon was engaged in implementing his insights. He was a practitioner of the scientific method and introduced the scientific revolution together with other scientists in the 17th century. Bacon has been called the father of empiricism.

He is considered the founder of experimental science.

This was the beginning of the new era. Bacon founded the Royal Society under Charles II in 1660. His endeavor was also the establishment of an encyclopedia which should be used worldwide. His aim was to create a science which is developed worldwide and based on the exchange of the information from all scientists.

He was a practical thinker. In the novel “The New Atlantis” he laid out his vision for a utopian New World in North America. It is a fictional island in the Pacific Ocean. The great ideas of the freedom of religion, here e.g. the Jews are treated equally as Christians, the women's rights, the abolition of slavery, the separation of church and state and until today.

These outlined ideas were as well influencing the legal reform and coming true in some major freedom of political expression, are a merit of Bacons thinking and writing and stipulated the debate in politics aspects in the Napoleonic Code, the “Code civil des Français” under Napoleon. The framework of thinking of Bacon which is shown in the quotation we have to interpret is also applied to the law. The Common Law of The Modern in English society is founded on the ideas of Bacon.

I see here mainly the idea of the empiricism. The main tasks are to look deep into the cases and to find the evidence through facts. These distinguishing features of the modern common law system are:

Using cases as repositories of evidence, determining the relevance of precedents by exclusionary principles of evidence and logic, here is an analogy to the applying of the methods in the science of nature, and treating opposing facts as anti-theses in terms of the "unwritten law" and set new facts.

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Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and David Hume were influenced by Francis Bacon.

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