

# COURT AND POLITICS: BACON'S POLITICAL THOUGHT

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Francis Bacon lived in and helped to mould an age when belief in methodically acquired knowledge pervaded the intellectual world. He designed "the whole thing anew upon a better plan," and commenced "a total reconstruction of sciences, arts, and all human knowledge, raised upon the proper foundations."<sup>1</sup> That knowledge, innovated by a new method, Bacon was confident, would be of greater utility and power to mankind. Politics also was an object of his innovation. Bacon tried to build his science of politics "on the solid foundation of experiences of every kind, and the same well examined and weighed."<sup>2</sup> The innovated knowledge about politics was expected to serve for not only the preservation, the prosperity, and the extension of the state, but also the political success of the courtier.

These things have been already noted widely.<sup>3</sup> But the content and background of Bacon's science of politics have not yet been treated in sufficient detail to make it entirely comprehensible. Therefore, centering upon these problems, I will attempt here to deal with one aspect of Bacon's political thought. Before beginning to consider these questions, I will attempt to make clear his aspirations and attitudes toward the politics of his day.

## I

For Bacon, as for most political thinkers of his day, political knowledge was distinct from knowledge of other fields. His experience in the political world was not the same as his experience in the natural world, and so he was not able to dispassionately observe and report the drift of political events. The political world which he tried to observe and derive axioms from was the object of his ambition as well as his estimate.

I shall expound this point more concretely. Bacon lived under the reigns of two monarchs. Two-thirds of his life was spent under the reign of Elizabeth, and the rest as a capable courtier of James I. For long years he stood on the periphery of the political world which centered upon the Queen. He was kept at a distance from the central government,

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<sup>1</sup> *Novum Organum, The Works of Francis Bacon*, ed. James Spedding, Robert L. Ellis, Douglas D. Heath 14 vols., (London, 1858-1874), IV, p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12. "It may also be asked whether I speak of natural philosophy only, or whether I mean that the other sciences, logic, ethics, and politics, should be carried on by this method. Now I certainly mean what I have said to be understood of them all." (*ibid.*, p. 112.) Bacon thought that the art of politics "springs from the same fountain as philosophy and is a great part thereof." *The Wisdom of the Ancients, Works VI*, p. 689.

<sup>3</sup> See W. H. Greenleaf, *Order, Empiricism and Politics* (London, 1964), pp. 206-232 and H. B. White, *Peace among the Willows: The Political Philosophy of Francis Bacon*. (Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague, 1968), pp. 29-44.

having lost Elizabeth's favour because of an unfortunate speech he made in Parliament and inspiring the Cecils with fear of his talent and ambition. Bacon, confident of his talent and dreaming of playing a glorious part in the court, continually experienced frustration. But his standing on the periphery enabled him to gain a greater insight into the nature of politics in his day. It was just after the death of Elizabeth that Bacon started to write *The Advancement of Learning*, which contained ordered statements about politics, which Bacon called civil knowledge.<sup>4</sup> This is the evidence that his political knowledge largely depended upon his observations and experiences in Elizabethan times. Bacon in this period should be dealt with as a political thinker rather than as a political actor.

Bacon highly estimated the reign of Elizabeth, though his career had not been favoured under it. He asserted that the Elizabethan age had been incomparably superior to any other age in peace and prosperity.

As for her government, I assure myself I shall not exceed if I do affirm that this part of the island never had forty-five years of better times; . . . the truth of religion established; the constant peace and security; the good administration of justice; the temperate use of the prerogative, not slackened, nor much strained; the flourishing state of learning, sortable to so excellent a patroness; the convenient estate of wealth and means, both of crown and subject; the habit of obedience, and the moderation of discontents; . . .<sup>5</sup>

This situation was, Bacon thought, achieved by Elizabeth's political art in coping with such various problems as the differences of religion, troubles with neighbouring countries, the ambition of Spain, and the opposition of Rome.

Upon another account also this peace so cultivated and maintained by Elizabeth is matter of admiration; namely, that it proceeded not from any inclination of the times to peace, but from her own prudence and good management. For in a kingdom labouring with intestine faction on account of religion, and standing as a shield and stronghold of defence against the then formidable and overbearing ambition of Spain, matter for war was nowise wanting; it was she who by her forces and her counsels combined kept it under. . . .<sup>6</sup>

One of the important understandings reached by Bacon, a shrewd political observer was that the political order could not be maintained without human skill based on prudence. To him, the statesmen who depend upon only experience could be likened to empiric physicians "who know neither the causes of diseases, nor the complexions of patients, nor peril of accidents, nor the true method of cures," or to advocates or lawyers "who are many times easily surprised when matter falleth out besides their experience, to the prejudice of the causes they handle."<sup>7</sup> Against these statesmen Bacon set learned governors in whose hands government was not disastrous. By plain precept, learning "teacheth them when and upon what

<sup>4</sup> What Bacon means by "civil knowledge" is a broadening of the ancient and revered science of politics, broadened by the inclusion of the knowledge of "conversation" and "negotiation or business," sciences much less ancient and revered. Howard B. White, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

<sup>5</sup> *The Proficiency and Advancement of Learning, Works III*, p. 307.

<sup>6</sup> *On the Fortunate Memory of Elizabeth Queen of England, Works VI*, p. 309.

<sup>7</sup> *Works III*, p. 270.

ground to resolve and how to carry things in suspense without prejudice till they resolve"<sup>8</sup> in the political world. Bacon was assured that political knowledge could teach statesmen what to do in appropriate circumstances. His profound belief in the possibility of learning in politics reflected the intellectual climate of his day.

For Bacon, who highly estimated the Elizabethan constitution, the urgent problem was no longer how and what political order should be constructed. Rather, the preservation of a given political order was ranked as a fundamental problem to be tackled; in other words, the knowledge a ruler needs in order to maintain peace and stability.

Beside the quest for order stands Bacon's rather personal concern about how to gain political influence within that order. To explain this, we need to consider the political situation of his day from another aspect.

Elizabeth established the court as a center of politics by her personal attraction and wise government. Her government was monarchical in the true sense that the Queen substantially made the final decisions on all political matters. She continually resolved problems in various fields through her decisions or her indecisions. This is not to say, however, that the political scene was exclusively occupied by the Queen, or that all political decisions rested in her arbitrary hand. The strong monarchy could not be established without the support of her council, consisting of competent courtier-statesmen. It may be said that Elizabeth's greatest political skill was her ability to tactfully use her privy council, which she entrusted with an extensive range of statecraft. She pursued "a policy which, however much it owed to the suggestion of others, was in fact nobody's but her own."<sup>9</sup>

Offices and places increased in proportion to the expansion of the central administration, promoting the ambitions of the courtiers. As a result, the court became an arena of struggle for royal favour, office, place, and patronage. Thus in and beyond the court, politics erupted and pervaded as a form of activity centering around the quest for competitive advantage.

Bacon was profoundly knowledgeable about the actualities of court politics. The following description vividly illustrates the situation of court involvement in the vortex of artifices.

. . . others seek to wash away their own vileness and evil consciences by accusing others; others make way for the honours and wishes of their friends by traducing and calumniating their opponents; while others get up stage plots and a number of the like fables against their enemies. These are the machinations of servants who are of a more dishonest nature. But those also who are naturally of greater honesty and principle, when they find no safeguard in their innocence (the prince not being able to distinguish truth from falsehood), throw off their honesty, and catching the court breezes allow themselves to be carried where they blow.<sup>10</sup>

Moreover, Bacon pointed out that in the courts of princes and in commonwealth "the ablest persons both to improve their own fortunes and to assail the fortunes of others are those

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 271. "The general counsels, and the plots and marshalling of affairs, come best from those that are learned." (*Essays or Counsels Civil and Moral, Works VI*, p. 497).

<sup>9</sup> J. E. Neale, *Queen Elizabeth* (London, 1938), pp. 177-178.

<sup>10</sup> *Of the Dignity and Advancement of Learning, Works V*, pp. 43-44.

who have no public duty to perform, but are ever occupied in this study of advancement in life.”<sup>11</sup> And he knew well that most of them, “never cared in all tempests what becomes of the ship of estates, so they may save themselves in the cockboat of their fortunes.”<sup>12</sup> They were better able to throw the political world into disorder than to contribute to its order. Thus politics as the pursuit of ambition becomes a source of conflict, and in the worst case endangered the supporting framework of political activity.

Bacon, with a strong ambition to become great at court, faced up to this kind of politics. His career as a political man involved struggle for high office in the situation described above.<sup>13</sup> He tried to cope with the demands of court politics and acquire the techniques of political success. We shall find that a certain part of Bacon’s politics reflects this conscious attempt. Thus Bacon’s political thinking was penetrated with two ambivalent motives: the preservation of order and the maximum pursuit of ambition within it. It may be said that Bacon concerned himself with what he thought was a vital problem both for his day and for himself.

Further, Bacon’s political thought has two other characteristics; the distinctiveness of his subject matter and his form of expression. What did Bacon accept as being the proper subject of political inquiry? He was clear about what was political and what was not. In *The Advancement of Learning*, Bacon defined “science civil and politic” as “the doctrine of conjugation of men in society,” contrasting it with morality.<sup>14</sup> The difference between morality and policy rests on the fact that the former “propoundeth to itself the framing of internal goodness,” while the latter “requireth only an external goodness.”<sup>15</sup> Politics was concerned with externals, and the promotion of man’s interior life did not belong to the province of the political.<sup>16</sup> Thus, Bacon separated politics from morality and accepted the political as a definable field of inquiry. This separation allowed him to perceive what the political really was. Bacon posed a fresh series of problems and tried to develop new lines of political speculation, as Machiavelli had done earlier.

But Bacon did not expound his political discourse systematically and tidily. This is not to say that he failed to formulate rigorous propositions concerning politics. For him, political science was a practical and not a purely theoretical science. His political thinking was centered upon questions of immediate action. Bacon recognized that “Methods are more fit to win consent or belief, but less fit to point to action,” but “particulars, being dispersed, do best agree with dispersed directions.”<sup>17</sup> Bacon’s political science consists in large part of examples from either contemporary affairs or various histories such as chronicles,

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 74.

<sup>12</sup> *Works III*, p. 279.

<sup>13</sup> Under the Elizabethan reign he remained a frustrated political man who would still have to prove his value. Frustration might be said to characterise most of Bacon’s public career. Cf., Joel J. Epstein, *Francis Bacon: A Political Biography* (Ohio, 1977).

<sup>14</sup> *Works III*, p. 428. Besides science civil and politics, Bacon used other words such as policy and civil knowledge to mean the science of politics.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 445.

<sup>16</sup> For Bacon policy serves only to keep an external order. Therefore the duty to the public which ought to be much more precious than the conservation of life and being is excluded from the object of policy, because it is concerned with an internal goodness. But in dealing with Bacon’s political thought the relation between politics and morality is an interesting and important problem. There is no space here to go into this problem, so I will confine myself to making clear what Bacon’s political science is.

<sup>17</sup> *Works III*, p. 405.

lives and narrations or relations. Its end was action, but action within a situation fraught with change, accident, and contingency. The form of his science responds to this demand. However, though depending upon examples in histories to a great extent, Bacon did not apply them uncritically. He tried to generalize examples to axioms through an universal insight into the affairs of the world, following the law of inquiry of truth that "there be not any thing in being and action, which should not be drawn and collected into contemplation and doctrine."<sup>18</sup>

## II

Bacon confined the political to the external conjugation of men in society. Thus his main concern became how men connected with each other to form and keep order. In this respect Bacon was, like Machiavelli and Hobbes, in a new line of political thought. But he and these two others differed in crucial points. In times of crisis when the web of political relationships had dissolved, Machiavelli believed that political order could not be created and maintained without the application of force and at least the threat of violence. Also, depicting a multitude of men who consciously agreed to form a political society, Hobbes assumed that behind them was an absolute sovereign who ruled by fear. Bacon, on the other hand, lived in a world with a system of interrelated function, an ordered structure. As a result, he could find three distinct but related ties that connected men to society without the application of force or the threat of violence. Thus in accordance with the three summary actions in society, which are conversation, negotiation, and government, Bacon's political science is comprised of three wisdoms: "wisdom of the behaviour, wisdom of business, and wisdom of state."<sup>19</sup>

### *The Wisdom of Conversation*

It might appear strange to us that the wisdom of conversation or behaviour is concerned with the political. But it was indispensable for court politics and for the political actor at court. I would like to begin by making clear the background of this wisdom.

One of the most striking features of the Elizabethan reign was the expansion and refinement of the court. The splendour of the court was the nation's pride and the monarch's dignity. And the Queen was the center of the newly refined court. "The Court served to distract the nobles from the dangerous rural pastimes of riot and rebellion, and to occupy them in time-consuming ceremonial and intrigue, both of which centered round the Prince and tended to enhance his prestige and his authority."<sup>20</sup> As court attendance became a social convention, knowledge of manners and courtesy was increasingly demanded. The publication of an English translation of Castiglione's *II Cortigiano*, which instructs courtiers on how to serve princes perfectly in every reasonable manner and thereby obtain favour from them and praise from other men, clearly shows this tendency.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 456.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 445.

<sup>20</sup> Lawrence Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy* (Oxford, 1965), p. 476.

The court, with an elaborate system of rituals and symbols, was never close to the people. Opportunities for the Queen to appear before the people were numerous, for the court was constantly on the move. She, gorgeously arrayed, went in procession through street and countryside to draw the allegiance of the people to herself. Elizabeth's Accession day was made a day of national thanksgiving and festival, and continued throughout the reign to be celebrated as one of the great days of the year.<sup>21</sup> On this day, the spectacle of her knights engaging in the rituals of chivalry emerged as a new kind of semi-religious festival. Thus the monarchy was transformed into a cult to focus loyalty in a common reverence.<sup>22</sup> Elizabethan politics exploited and utilized appearance and feints. The people were easily caught up by the impressive appearance of power and authority.

The effect of visual politics was clearly recognized by Elizabeth, who loved the gorgeous processions and rituals, as did the statesmen who staged them. The Queen, always a focus of the people's attention in rituals and festivals, considered how to display herself. In the Parliament that dealt with the execution of Mary, Elizabeth delivered the following speech:

We princes are set as it were upon stages in the sight and view of all the world. The least spot is soon spied in our garments, the smallest blemish presently observed in us at a great distance. It behooveth us therefore to be careful that our proceedings be just and honorable.<sup>23</sup>

And Raleigh, a favourite of the Queen and captain of her guards, exhorted the exploitation of appearance as follows:

The prince himself is to sit sometimes in place of public justice, and to give an experiment of his wisdom and equity, whereby great reverence and estimation is gotten; . . . where, for better performing of this princely duty, some special causes may be selected, which may thoroughly be debated and considered upon by the prince in private, with the help and advice of his learned counsel, and so be decided publicly, as before is said, by the prince himself.<sup>24</sup>

These words show that the statesmen of the day recognized the significance of performance in political relations.

Bacon also recognized the significance of the wisdom of conversation or behaviour, though allotting only one section to it in *The Advancement of Learning*. "The sum of behaviour is," he wrote, "to retain a man's own dignity, without intruding upon the liberty of others."<sup>25</sup> Emphasizing the ordering of action and speech to react alertly to changing conditions, Bacon concluded:

Behaviour seemeth to me as a garment of the mind, and to have the conditions of a garment. For it ought to be shaped so as to set forth any good making of the mind, and hide any deformity; and above all, it ought not to be too strait or restrained for exercise or motion.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Neale, *op. cit.*, p. 205.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Frances A. Yates, *Astraea* (London, 1975), pp. 88–111.

<sup>23</sup> *The Public Speaking of Queen Elizabeth*, ed. G. P. Rice (New York, 1951), p. 90.

<sup>24</sup> *Maxims of State, The Works of Sir Walter Raleigh, vol. VIII* (New York, 1829), p. 17.

<sup>25</sup> *Works III*, p. 446.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 447.

The courtier or political actor should constantly play the role cast for him by changing times. He cannot afford a consistent and uniform character.

The fact that this part of civil knowledge was dealt with briefly does not mean that Bacon thought lightly of it. In connection with the wisdom of business and government, he dealt with it in other parts of this book and in other works. Bacon stressed the importance of rhetoric in politics, using the metaphor of Orpheus theatre.

. . . 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 books, 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.<sup>27</sup>

It is not profound wisdom but eloquence that prevails in an active life that is played on the stage of politics. The reason why action, "the virtue of a player, should be placed so high," Bacon reasoned, is that "there is in human nature generally more of the fool than of the wise; and therefore these faculties by which the foolish part of men's mind is taken are most potent."<sup>28</sup> In terms of manipulative politics, Bacon recommended the exploitation of the ceremony and the symbols of political belief. And he suggested that trophies, funeral eulogies and monuments, and the triumphs of the generals be exploited in order to inspire the people with military virtues.<sup>29</sup>

Moreover, Bacon accepted as the secret of politics the well-known political axiom that princes should "know as well how to play the part of the lion in violence and the fox in guile," even though admitting that it was corruptly expounded by Machiavelli.<sup>30</sup> As a political actor, the ruler must be a skillful pretender and dissembler. The politically ambitious who exclusively pursued and exercised naked power had lost an active part in the political world of Bacon's day. For him a competent political man was a kind of actor not only playing many roles and wearing many masks, but also creating and exploiting illusions that served his political ends. It may be said that these observations of Bacon are reflective of the political style of the day and of his insight into human nature.

### *The Architecture of Fortune*

It is the second part of Bacon's civil knowledge construct that is most clearly reflective of the characteristics of Elizabethan politics. In the wisdom of business, the precept on how to raise and make fortune shows that Bacon grasped the nature of court politics especially deeply. As we have already seen, the court was a universe full of tensions and strivings, though it seemed to be formally ordered. There, political contests openly and overtly arose out of competition for the limited goods of power, office, prestige, and royal favour. We might go so far as to say that at court almost anything was permitted except recourse to

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 302.

<sup>28</sup> *Works VI*, pp. 401-402.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 452.

<sup>30</sup> *Works III*, p. 345.

violence that would endanger the supporting framework. The politics that Bacon confronted consisted of activity that centered around the quest for competitive advantage between groups or individuals within a situation of change and relative scarcity.

Bacon seriously tried to occupy an observation point within these situations and look at political facts as they really were. This is Bacon's scientific method. And it enabled him to gain the necessary knowledge of politics to act wisely at court. To him, fruitless speculation disengaged from realities must be removed from civil knowledge. This is why Bacon accepted Machiavelli who wrote about "what men do and not what they ought to do."<sup>31</sup> The political actor should "know exactly all the conditions of the serpent; his baseness and going upon his belly, his volubility and lubricity, his envy and sting, and the rest; that is, all forms and natures of evil."<sup>32</sup>

This knowledge is necessary because "an honest man can do no good upon those that are wicked to reclaim them, without the help of the knowledge of evil."<sup>33</sup> But Bacon suggested, on the other hand, that this knowledge might corrupt young men "not thoroughly seasoned in religion and morality."<sup>34</sup> In the worst case, it might help courtiers who would bring a great and flourishing state to ruin and decay, to gain favour with the prince and estimation from the vulgar.<sup>35</sup> Although he recognized that this kind of knowledge was double-edged, Bacon expounded the techniques of political success and explained how to cope with the demands of court life.

First of all, Bacon took as the most summary the creation of an efficient intelligence. To win in the struggle for royal favour, office, and place, the political actor should "procure good informations of particulars touching persons, their natures, their desires and ends, their customs and fashions, their helps and advantages"; so again "their weaknesses and disadvantages; their friends, factions, dependances; and again their opposites, enviers, competitors, their moods and times"; "their principles, rules, and observations, and the like: and this not only of persons, but of actions; what are on foot from time to time, and how they are conducted, favoured, opposed; and how they import, and the like."<sup>36</sup> As this long list shows, Bacon counted it a secret of success to be the best-informed person. "These informations of particulars touching persons and actions" become "the minor propositions in every active syllogism."<sup>37</sup>

Then Bacon gave instructions for creating an efficient intelligence. The first is "to have general acquaintance and inwardness with those which have general acquaintance and look most into the world." The second is to "keep a good mediocrity in liberty of speech and secrecy" in order to draw out information from others. The last is "the reducing of man's self to this watchful and serene habit, as to make account and purpose, in every conference and action, as well to observe as to act."<sup>38</sup> Thus the successful political actor needs a highly intellectual ability to procure and deal with vast and various information. What should be noted is that this intellectual activity has no ethical quality of discovering and establishing

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 430.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 431.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 431.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 440.

<sup>35</sup> *Works VI*, p. 444.

<sup>36</sup> *Works III*, p. 456.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 457.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 460.

objective goodness. It suffices for the political actor to know only another's character, motivation, ability, limitations, and so on in purely political terms.

The lack of an ethical quality in Bacon's civil knowledge becomes more apparent if we consider another aspect of intellectual activity. Bacon wrote that "the oracle 'know thyself' is not only a rule of universal wisdom, but has a special place in politics."<sup>39</sup> But the politic glass for knowing one's self in politics is not the word of God, but "the state of the world or times wherein we live."<sup>40</sup> Thus the second precept of self-understanding is neither a religious self-reflection nor Cartesian self-examination. This precept centers around knowing the relative position of one's self in the changing situation in order to enter into an advantageous connection with others.

For Bacon the problem was no longer the statesman's quest for moral perfection, which, by its moral quality, would benefit the community. The virtues of statesmen turned out to be agility, shrewdness, and a calculating disposition regarding political forces within the court.

A more practical precept, which instructs in the techniques of political success, follows these two precepts. It is the opening and revealing of a man's self, and is closely related to the first part of civil knowledge. The essence of this precept is to flourish and enhance virtue and cover defects by caution, colour, and confidence.<sup>41</sup> Bacon expounded three subtly distinct ways of responding to situations. The first is to "frame the mind to be pliant and obedient to occasion" by making the wheels of the mind concentric and voluble with the wheels of fortune.<sup>42</sup> The second is not only to turn with the occasions but also to run with the occasions, and not to strain one's credit or strength to over hard or extreme points, but to choose in one's actions that which is most passable.<sup>43</sup> The last is to urge and pursue one's own plots as well as make use of occasions aptly and dexterously.<sup>44</sup>

These responses should, Bacon thought, be selectively applied to the following end-rational thinking. The precept of this "Architecture of Fortune" is "to accustom our minds to judge of the proportion or value of things as they conduce and are material to our particular ends; and that to do substantially, and not superficially."<sup>45</sup> For Bacon the selecting of the type of action appropriate to a given situation meant possessing a sensitive and discriminating intelligence that allowed for the weighing of several factors simultaneously, as well as having a knack of imaginatively projecting possible consequences.

Even though it was an arena of struggle for political influence, the court was not a world disturbed by a whirl of disconnected events or activities. It was supported by fundamental conventions or a common political morality that contributed to rational political behaviour. Through observing and acting at court, Bacon discovered rational political action at court that responded to these factors. Of course this rationality was not owing to the rationalized institutional arrangements or the established routines through which behaviour smoothly runs. The rationality of Bacon's politics was a response to court politics.

<sup>39</sup> *Works V*, p. 64.

<sup>40</sup> *Works III*, p. 461.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 463.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 465-466.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 466.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 466.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 468.

### *The Art of Government*

The third part of Bacon's civil knowledge is concerned with the more comprehensive problem of how to maintain and control the state with a certain vision, as compared with the second part, which deals with the problem of adaptation to a given order. Here the knowledge not only of the actualities of politics but also of certain fountains of justice are needed. This knowledge contains three political duties; "first, the preservation, secondly, the happiness and prosperity, and thirdly the extension, of empire."<sup>46</sup> Bacon asserted that the art of government is "a part of knowledge secret and retired,"<sup>47</sup> and he allotted only four sections to it in *The Advancement of Learning*. But the problem of government was dealt with at length both in *Essays* and in *De sapientia veterum*. So the third part of civil knowledge will be discussed here giving attention mainly to these works.

In this part, a realistic viewpoint also came to the front. Bacon did not have any illusions about man as constituent of the state. The ruling passion of the aristocrats was an insatiable ambition for dominating others. They were in most cases motivated by private interests, not by public duty. On the other hand, the common people were unreasonable, superstitious, and easily agitated over religion. The discontented commonalty is a source of sedition and trouble. The ruler should recognize what they really are and face up to a mobile and conflict-laden situation not in ethical terms but in external political terms.

Thus the most important thing in government is accurate intelligence that informs about the true nature of the people. "*Principis est virtus maxima nosse suos.*"<sup>48</sup> Princes must know their counsellors as well as their counsellors know them. And "the natures and dispositions of the people, their conditions and necessities, their factions and combinations, their animosities and discontents," ought to be in great part clear and transparent unto princes and states.<sup>49</sup> The essence of government is to order and control the people based upon this intelligence.

The first concern of Bacon in this respect is how to control and exploit the ambitious aristocrats, who are sometimes the political rivals of princes as well as the ruling class with them. Princes are required to stand aloof from the statesmen disputing in factions. Kings have to "beware how they side themselves, and make themselves as of a faction or party; for leagues within the state are ever pernicious to monarchies."<sup>50</sup> The chiefest wisdom in respect to factions is "either in ordering those things which are general, and wherein men of several factions do nevertheless agree; or in dealing with correspondence to particular persons, one by one."<sup>51</sup> Also, Bacon took as a remedy for factions the principle of divide and rule. "Generally, the dividing and breaking of all factions and combinations that are

<sup>46</sup> *Works V*, p. 79. In *De Dignitate et Augmentis Scientiarum* Bacon expounded at length a treatise touching the extension of empire and a treatise on universal justice or the fountains of equity. But here I have not dealt with these problems.

<sup>47</sup> *Works III*, pp. 473-474.

<sup>48</sup> *Works VI*, p. 426.

<sup>49</sup> *Works III*, p. 474.

<sup>50</sup> *Works VI*, p. 500.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 499.

adverse to the state, and setting them at distance, or at least distrust, amongst themselves, is not one of the worst remedies."<sup>52</sup>

Ambitious courtiers ought to be not only restrained but also wisely exploited for the state. Here was developed the cool-headed Machiavellism aimed at enhancing the authority and dignity of princes. In his treatment of the ancient fable of the Cyclopes, Bacon instructed on how to use cruel and bloody ministers. The way of utilizing them is to take them into service in need of either severity of executions or harshness in exactions, and after that to leave them to the course of law and the vengeance of the friends and relatives of their victims, and to popular hatred.<sup>53</sup> Thus it is asserted that they are exploited as pawns and in disregard of their personalities. In government, "he is the greater and deeper politique, that can make other men the instruments of his will and ends and yet never acquaint them with his purpose, so as they shall do it and yet not know what they do, than he that imparteth his meaning to those he employeth."<sup>54</sup> One of the reasons why the art of government is not fit to utter may be that its instructions are too baldly Machiavellian.

Further, through the interpretation of Metis, Bacon set forth the wise and politic use of counsel by kings. What he asserted as the secret of empire is as follows:

That first they ought to refer matters unto them, which is the first begetting or impregnation; but when they are elaborate, moulded, and shaped in the womb of their counsel, and grow ripe and ready to be brought forth, that then they suffer not their counsel to go through with the resolution and direction, as if it depended on them; but take the matter back into their own hands, and make it appear to the world that the degrees and final directions proceeded from themselves; and not only from their authority, but from their head and device.<sup>55</sup>

The princes should first know well their counsellors and draw to themselves those who are faithful and sincere, plain and direct, and then take their counsel concerning matters and execute affairs as if they did so by themselves. This is the secret of empire.

Another matter of state is concerned with the great proportion of people. As already shown, Bacon warned not to look upon the people as reasonable. They often "spurn at their own good," driven by fears or discontentments.<sup>56</sup> Based upon this notion of people, Bacon devised a strategy for manipulating and controlling people. One is a way of setting affection against affection, and mastering one by another. It employs "the predominant affections of *fear* and *hope*, for the suppressing and bridling the rest."<sup>57</sup> Upon this foundation is erected the excellent use of *praemium* and *poena*, whereof civil states consist. And he exhorted the political actor to create and exploit appearance, which is related to the first part of civil knowledge. "It is a certain sign of a wise government and proceeding, when it can hold men's hearts by hopes, when it cannot by satisfaction; and when it can handle things in such

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 412.

<sup>53</sup> *Works VI*, p. 704-705.

<sup>54</sup> *Works III*, p. 359.

<sup>55</sup> *Works VI*, p. 424.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 409.

<sup>57</sup> *Works III*, p. 438.

manner, as no evil shall appear so peremptory but that it hath some outlet of hope."<sup>58</sup> For Bacon political action was in large measure manipulative rather than constructive.

Thus, in realistic terms Bacon elaborated the strategy of coping with political problems and getting through crisis. And that is the core of his new science of politics aimed at maintaining at least the external order.

But on the other hand, Bacon clearly recognized the limitations of striving for an ad hoc solution. That, he wrote, is "but to try masteries with fortune."<sup>59</sup> A long-term policy would be necessary to establish security and peace, preventing political crises beforehand. In *Essays*, in which Bacon analyses the causes of sedition and troubles and offers remedies for them, we find a plan of state that was not directly expounded in *The Advancement of Learning*.

This plan is also penetrated with a purely political viewpoint divested of ethical elements. Its core is a plan for building up a rich country. It was proposed that the material cause of sedition, that is, want and poverty in the state, should be removed by any means possible. To this purpose "serveth, the opening and well-balancing of trade; the cherishing of manufactures; the banishing of idleness; the repressing of waste and excess by sumptuary laws; the improvement and husbanding of the soil; the regulating of prices of things vendible; the moderating of taxes and tributes, and the like."<sup>60</sup> Bacon repeatedly exhorted the necessity to protect the commonalty engaged in productive jobs.

Bacon regarded as the reliable foundation of commonwealth the support of the people gained by enriching the country. This plan of state may be said to reflect the fact that the politics of imposition had been comparatively giving way to the politics of interest in Elizabethan England. One of the most remarkable policies of Elizabeth was that which aimed at coping with the social disorder brought about by economic change. For example, the Statute of Artificers in 1563 was the most comprehensive of many acts regulating industrial conditions. Many acts were passed to relieve the poor, whose condition was the major cause of social unrest. Among these, Elizabeth's famous Act of 1601, notwithstanding later changes, "determined the main features of the national policy in relation to the poor until the reforms which followed the Poor Law Commission of 1834."<sup>61</sup>

The important problem of politics, Bacon believed, was to attract the masses to support the political order by meeting the material needs of the people, protecting their possessions, and eliminating dangerous inequalities in society.

In Bacon's political thinking, the element of coercion relatively receded to the background. In the same way the significance of religion was extremely reduced. Even though admitting that religion is the chief bond of human society,<sup>62</sup> Bacon placed political unity above religious, at least in the world of politics. "Concerning the Means of procuring Unity; men must beware, that in the procuring or muniting of religious unity they do not dissolve and deface the laws of charity and of human society."<sup>63</sup> Unity of religion should not be achieved by an intolerable inquisition to pry into people's lives. Rather, it should be achieved by a

<sup>58</sup> *Works VI*, p. 411.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 420.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 410.

<sup>61</sup> J. R. Tanner, *Tudor Constitutional Documents 1485-1603* (Cambridge, 1951), p. 472.

<sup>62</sup> *Works VI*, p. 381.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 383.

policy of comprehension based on purely political considerations. Religion ought to be subordinated to political rule and organized so as not to hinder the efficiency of that rule. Bacon proposed that "there is no better way to stop the rising of new sects and schisms, than to reform abuses; to compound the smaller differences; to proceed mildly, and not with sanguinary persecutions; and rather to take off the principal authors by winning and advancing them, than to enrage them by violence and bitterness."<sup>64</sup>

These proposals remind us of Elizabeth's religious policy. On the religious problem, she took a moderate and ambiguous position that met attacks from several sides. For her, outward conformity was enough; a man's conscience should be his own, not the state's concern. Her religious policy was a product of compromise grown out of purely political considerations.

We may find Bacon's support of religious toleration in his denial of bloody persecutions. But the toleration that he promoted was not a principled defence of religious liberty which gave homage to the rights of conscience. What really mattered to him was political necessity. Bacon realized "the patent unreality of a system of theory which attempted to relate political behaviour to a Will of God which was never expressed clearly." In other words, he "reacted against a system of political theory based essentially on the interpretation of Scripture."<sup>65</sup> Considering his secular view of the religious problem, his dislike of bloodshed, and his relative tolerance, Bacon was essentially moderate and utilitarian like Politiques in France.

It has been repeatedly pointed out that in Bacon's political theory the element of power was not foremost. But concerning foreign policy, we find him urging power politics. He asserted that "the true greatness of kingdoms and estates and the means thereof" is a problem fit for great and mighty princes to have in their hand.<sup>66</sup> For Bacon, the greatness of estates depended upon military strength. "No nation which doth not directly profess arms, may look to have greatness fall into their mouths." Therefore "it importeth most, that a nation do profess arms as their principal honour, study, and occupation."<sup>67</sup> Bacon exhorted the training of the people to become valiant and martial, and in this respect praised the policy of King Henry VII.<sup>68</sup> He also said that "certainly to a kingdom or estate, a just and honourable war is the true exercise" and "serveth to keep the body in health."<sup>69</sup>

In a political world composed of states in conflict with each other, Bacon took the exercise of military power for granted and encouraged it. This is a direct reflection of the situation of Elizabethan England exposed to the danger of aggression from Spain.

Immediately before the outbreak of war with Spain, the queen as a general of her army took a firm stand, ready to risk a war. In her speech to her army she resolutely declared:

And therefore I am come amongst you, as you see, at this time, not for my recreation and disport; but being resolved in the midst of the heat of the battle to live or die amongst you all; to lay down for my God and for my Kingdom and for my people my honour and my blood, even in the dust. . . . I myself will

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 514

<sup>65</sup> Felix Raab, *The English Face of Machiavelli* (London, 1965), p. 76.

<sup>66</sup> *Works VI*, p. 445.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 449.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 447.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 450.

take up arms; I myself will be your general, judge, and rewarder of every one of your virtues in the field.<sup>70</sup>

His proposition that “to be master of the sea is an abridgement of a monarch”<sup>71</sup> indicates that Bacon grasped and foresaw the present and future of England in international society. Bacon knew very well that the logic of power dominated foreign policy. What should be noted here is that he did not bring it directly into internal politics as the primary means. Bacon may be said to be a clear-eyed realist in that he understood two distinct logics of politics and prescribed their proper use.

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This paper has dealt with Bacon’s political science, referring to Elizabethan political actualities. I have shown that Bacon’s science of politics addressed almost all the political problems of his day as well as his own personal concerns and ambitions and that Bacon adjusted these policies which had been successively executed by Elizabeth to a part of his politics. The historical background has not been described arbitrarily nor have Bacon’s theories been presented selectively to correspond with the historical facts. The coincidence is due to his method, which was based upon “the solid foundation of experiences of every kind, and the same well examined and weighed.”

Bacon’s methodology is a conscious attempt to apply the successful approach of natural science to the raw material of politics. But it was neither unhistorical nor deductive. Bacon built his science of politics on a consideration of historical reality, past and present. To him, the study of contemporary affairs was an especially necessary prerequisite for political understanding, because his political thinking was always directed to immediate action. His thought was not purely theoretical, but rather empirical and based on appropriate empirical data and historical material.<sup>72</sup>

As already suggested, Bacon’s science of politics contains the somewhat ambivalent tendencies toward the preservation of order and the maximum pursuit of ambition within that order. How are these directions related to each other? For Bacon, the doing of good requires power and place as the vantage point and commanding ground. Power to do good is the true and lawful end of aspiration. This justification is however sometimes clouded by a strong ambition in his political life. In Bacon’s mind this ambivalence might be at least solved by thinking as follows.

Of ambitions, it is less harmful, the ambition to prevail in great things, than that other to appear in every thing; for that breeds confusion, and mars business. But yet it is less danger to have an ambitious man stirring in business,

<sup>70</sup> Rice, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

<sup>71</sup> *Works VI*, p. 451.

<sup>72</sup> In “the part moral knowledge, concerning the Culture and Regiment of the Mind,” Bacon admitted that “his labour was but to collect into an Art or Science that which hath been pretermitted by others as matter of common sense and experience.” (*Works III*, p. 443). We may say that he also applied this method to civil knowledge.

than great in dependances. He that seeketh to be eminent amongst able men hath a great task; but that is ever good for the public.<sup>73</sup>

In Elizabethan society there emerged and grew various forces in the political, economic, and religious fields that would oppose and contend against kings. Thus the political world was transformed into that which was crowding and fluctuating internally, though seeming to be hierarchically ordered externally. As Tillyard pointed out, the Elizabethans "were terrified lest order should be upset, and appalled by the visible tokens of disorder that suggested its upsetting. They were obsessed by the fear of chaos and the fact of mutability; and the obsession was powerful in proportion as their faith in the cosmic order was strong."<sup>74</sup> Bacon was also under the same uneasiness. He recognized that the political order was in danger of falling into chaos without prudent control. He exhorted kings to deal with "their prelates or clergy, their nobles, their second-nobles or gentlemen, their merchants, their commons, and their men of war." For "from all these arise dangers, if care and circumspection be not used."<sup>75</sup> Bacon's politics may be said to be a serious and conscious attempt to remove these dangers and to keep the existing state stable and prosperous.

Nevertheless, these forces were not obstacles to court politics but activated it, in so far as the monarch manipulated them and won and retained the loyalty and devotion of her subjects, on which the success or failure of her reign depended. After the death of Elizabeth, England was without a prudent and wise ruler for a long time. And various social forces unrestrainedly released their energies and threatened the peace of the country. By degrees the court and the country would be rent in two, destroying the Elizabethan political system. Considering these facts, we may conclude by saying that Bacon's politics, which revealed the rationality of court politics and systematized his distilled experience, is like to Minerva's owl flying into the deepening twilight.

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<sup>73</sup> *Works VI*, p. 467.

<sup>74</sup> E. M. W. Tillyard, *The Elizabethan World Picture* (Penguin Books, 1972), p. 24.

<sup>75</sup> *Works VI*, p. 420.