

ENGL 2283.X1 – Fall 2011
Second Short Paper
Due: 4:00 PM, Nov. 10
Electronic Submission through Acorn

For your second assignment, choose one of the Bacon essays you read for class on Oct. 6, with the exception of “Of Studies” because we discussed that one on class, and discuss it in the context of one of the following excerpts from other of Bacon’s works.

I am not looking for an answer to any preconceived question I expect you to stumble across. I do not expect you to lead your reader to any conclusion. Rather, I want you to write several pages in which you look for connections between one of the following excerpts and the essay of your choice. Then, I expect you to distill those several pages down to no more than three pages.

In your final three page submission for grade I will look for evidence of your making sense of both the excerpt of your choice, and the essay of your choice, and of your thinking about how the excerpt can inform your understanding of the essay.

Thus, you will be graded:

- not on a demonstrated understanding of the essay, but on your attempt to understand it;
- not on a demonstrated understanding of the excerpt, but on evidence that you have attempted to make sense of it;
- not on the development of an unmistakable connection between the excerpt and the essay, but on evidence that you have done enough thinking and enough writing on the two to begin to see for yourself how reading the excerpt might have influenced your thinking about the essay;
- and on proper formatting (which includes correct spelling, punctuation use, and grammar, in addition to any explicit instructions provided).

Do not include a title page. Centre a meaningful title at the top of your first page. Put your name a single spaced line below the title. Start your text two lines below that, justified to the left.

Do not indent your first paragraph. Indent all subsequent paragraphs.

Name your file thusly: LastName-Journal_Entry . Submit it through acorn the way you did last time. (Those who use word processors other than MSWord should be sure to check, when the assignment is returned, to ensure your original formatting has survived. Sometimes an .odt document can lose italics, for example, when migrated to MSWord, which is the environment I use when grading electronically.)

1) In the *Novum Organum*, which translates roughly as New Method, Bacon wrote:

The idols and false notions which are now in possession of the human understanding, and have taken deep root therein, not only so beset men's minds that truth can hardly find entrance, but even after entrance is obtained, they will again in the very instauration of the sciences meet and trouble us, unless [people] . . . fortify themselves as far as may be against their [i.e. the idols'] assaults.

There are four classes of Idols which beset men's minds. [I call] . . . the first class Idols of the Tribe; the second, Idols of the Cave; the third, Idols of the Market Place; the fourth, Idols of the Theater. (Aphorisms 38 – 9)

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 . . . 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. Whence it was well observed by Heraclitus that men look for sciences in their own lesser worlds, and not in the greater or common world.

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 Theater, 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. (Aphorisms 41-44)

2) In *The Advancement of Learning* Bacon wrote:

Another diversity of Method, whereof the consequence is great, is the delivery of knowledge in Aphorisms, or in Methods; wherein we may observe that it hath been too much taken into custom, out of a few axioms or observations upon any subject, to make a solemn and formal art, filling it with some discourses, and illustrating it with examples, and digesting it into a sensible Method. But the writing in Aphorisms hath many excellent virtues, where to the writing in Method doth not approach.

For first, it trieth the writer, whether he be superficial or solid: for Aphorisms, except they should be ridiculous, cannot be made but of the pith and heart of sciences; for discourse of illustration is cut [53] off: recitals of examples are cut off; discourse of connection and order is cut off; descriptions of practice are cut off. So there remaineth nothing to fill the Aphorisms but some good quantity of observation: and therefore no man can suffice, nor in reason will attempt to write Aphorisms, but he that is sound and grounded. But in Methods,

*Tantum series juncturaque pollet,
Tantum de medio sumptis accedit honoris;*

as a man shall make a great shew of an art, which, if it were disjointed, would come to little. Secondly, methods are more fit to win consent or belief, but less fit to point to action; for they carry a kind of demonstration in orb or circle, one part illuminating another, and therefore satisfy; but particulars, being dispersed, do best agree with dispersed directions. And lastly, Aphorisms, representing a knowledge broken, do invite men to inquire further; whereas Methods, carrying the show of a total, do secure men, as if they were at farthest.