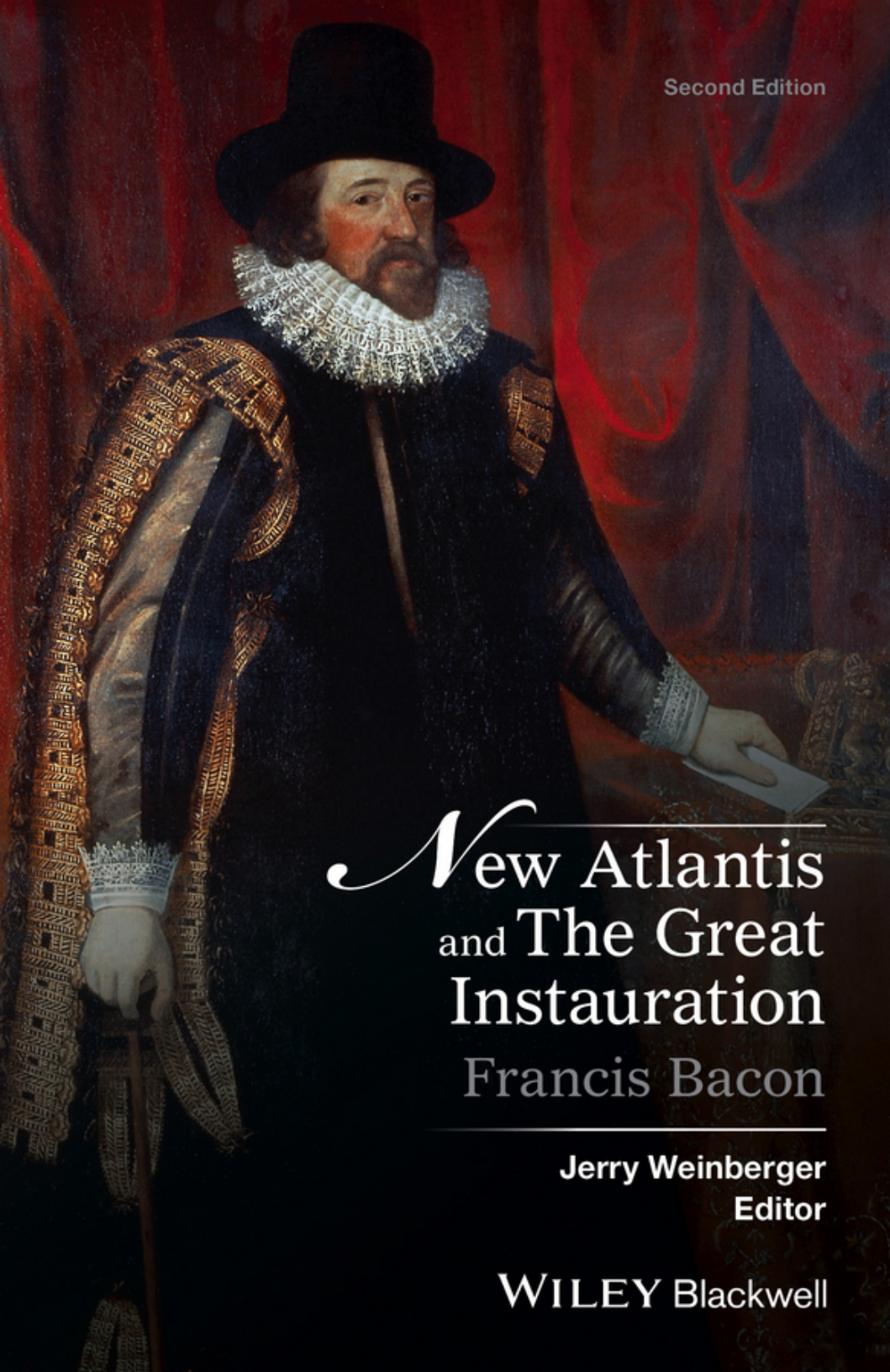
Second Edition
New Atlantis
and The Great
Instauration
Francis Bacon
Jerry Weinberger
Editor
WILEY Blackwell

New Atlantis and The Great Instauration

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FRANCIS BACON

New Atlantis and The Great Instauration

Second Edition

Edited by

Jerry Weinberger

WILEY Blackwell

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Editorial Offices
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The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 8SQ, UK

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Preface: Why a Second Edition?

The Crofts Classics edition of Sir Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis and The Great Instauration* has been in classroom use since the late 1970s, having been revised to correct typography in 1980. Since those early years much scholarship, including some of my own, has been published on Bacon in general and on these two texts. I therefore thought a significantly revised second edition was in order, especially since some of my earlier conclusions about these works of Bacon had changed, even if only slightly.

Given the opportunity to bring a new edition into print with Wiley, I thought it best to increase the amount of material in order to provide student-readers wider context in which to consider Bacon's project as a whole and *New Atlantis* in particular. To this end I decided first to provide the aphorisms on the Idols of the Mind from *The Great Instauration: Novum organum Book One*. The purpose of this addition is to make clear how much Bacon thought the problems of human reason resulted from reason's inherent weaknesses, not just the weight of obscure traditions. In order to broaden the political context for *New Atlantis* I have included two of Bacon's *Essays*: "Of Unity in Religion" and "Of the True Greatness of Kingdoms and Estates." These two essays, along with reference in the interpretive essay to Bacon's 1622 *The History of the Reign of King Henry the Seventh*, link Bacon's utopian fable to some of his most concrete considerations of practical political life, especially as regards religion and war. I decided as well to place the interpretive essay on *New Atlantis* and Bacon's essays at the end of the volume, as it will be more useful to students *after* they have read Bacon's texts.

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For his warm and helpful support for this second edition I would like to thank Andrew J. Davidson, Senior Editor (History, Social Sciences & Humanities) at John Wiley & Sons, Inc. The project could not have gone forward without the indispensable help of Project Editor Julia Kirk and Editorial Assistant Maddie Koufogazos. Project Manager Ian Critchley did a masterful job overseeing the copy editing, typesetting, and proofreading stages of production. My wife Diane, as usual whenever I'm absorbed in a book project, put up with much neglect while I worked on this new edition. Her cheerfulness during my distraction never fails to amaze.

Note on the Texts

The text of the *New Atlantis* is reprinted from the widely respected, once standard edition of Bacon's works by Spedding, Ellis, and Heath. The original spelling and punctuation have everywhere been retained. The *New Atlantis* was first published by Rawley in 1627, after Bacon's death, and no original manuscript of the work remains. All the editions of the *New Atlantis* since 1627 have been reprints of Rawley's first edition, and fortunately there are no serious variations in the editions. The 1627 edition has "Solamona" and "Salomon's House," while the 1658 and 1670 editions, among others, have "Salomona" and "Solomon's House." Spedding follows the 1627 edition and is supported in this choice by the Latin translation. Although Spedding is probably correct, the variation makes no difference at all in the meaning of the text. The 1627 and 1670 editions have "It so fell out, that there was in one of the boats, one of our wise men of the society of Salomon's House . . . " while the 1658 edition, which Spedding follows, has "It so fell out, that there was in one of the boats one of the wise men of the society of Solomon's House . . . " (see p. 74, below). In this instance, Spedding is perhaps wrong, since the 1627 and 1670 texts are supported by the Latin translation. But Spedding's text is not emended in this volume, because, again, the variation makes no difference at all in the meaning of the text. The 1627 edition and Spedding have "came aboard" (see p. 64, below), while the 1658 edition has "made aboard"; and the 1627 edition has "that we knew he spake it . . . " (see p. 77, below), while the 1658 edition and Spedding have "that we knew that he spake it. . . . " These minor variations require no emendation. No critical problems in the text have so far been discovered that would warrant rejecting Spedding's text as the standard edition of the *New Atlantis*. *The Great Instauration* was published originally in Latin in 1620 as *Instauratio magna*. The translation used in this volume for the preliminaries and the aphorisms of *Novum*

organum on the Idols of the Mind is Spedding's widely reprinted translation. Although Spedding's translation was long considered to be the standard, it is sometimes loose, and two important corrections have been noted (see pp. 21, 32, below). Volume XI of the *Oxford Francis Bacon*, edited by the late Graham Rees, will doubtless become the standard and, it is to be hoped, widely reprinted translation and edition. I have referred to it as necessary for this classroom edition.

Principal Dates in the Life of Sir Francis Bacon

1561	Born in London, son of Lord Keeper of the Seal.
1573–1575	Studied at Cambridge.
1576	Enrolled at Gray's Inn, where he studied for less than one year.
1582	Became a barrister.
1584	Sat in the Commons. Bacon was an influential member of the House of Commons for the next thirty-six years.
1597	*Essays*.
1603	Knighted by James I.
1605	*Advancement of Learning*.
1612	*Essays*, enlarged.
1613	Appointed Attorney General.
1618	Made Lord Chancellor; created Baron Verulam.
1620	*The Great Instauration: Novum organum*.
1621	Created Viscount St. Albans; impeached for accepting bribes.
1622	*The History of the Reign of King Henry the Seventh*.
1624	Most likely date by which Bacon had written *New Atlantis*.
1625	*Essays*, greatly enlarged.
1626	Died April 9.
1627	*New Atlantis* published.

Introduction to the Second Edition

Along with Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Descartes, Francis Bacon was one of the founders of modern thought. These thinkers coupled realistic politics with a new science of nature in order to transform the age-old view of humanity's place in the world. They contended that once the efforts of the human intellect were directed from traditional concerns to new ones—from contemplation to action, from the account of what people ought to do to what they actually do, and from metaphysics to the scientific method for discovering natural causes—the harsh inconveniences of nature and political life would be relieved and overcome. No longer to be revered or endured, the realms of nature and society would become the objects of human control.

Bacon called his version of this project the "Great Instauration," an ambiguous term that means at once great restoration and great founding. But he left no doubt that he was engaged in something altogether new: His restoration—his reform of the ways and means of human reason—would in fact be a founding because its aim would be "to lay the foundation, not of any sect or doctrine, but of human utility and power," in order to "command nature in action."[1] Bacon did not, however, think his instauration would be quick or easy. It would surely provoke opposition from political, theological, and academic interests with something to lose in a new intellectual order. But for Bacon, the larger problem was that the impediments to the power of reason are deeply rooted in the character of reason itself. In his famous doctrine of the "Idols of the Mind," he outlined four categories of defects that infect and mislead human reason.

First, reason seeks more order in the world than actually exists and it gets fooled into thinking that impossible things

[1] ***Below***, pp. 17, 21.

exist. Second, reason tends to become obsessed with one cause that it thinks explains everything. Third, words fool reason, as if all words refer to something real. Finally, reason has been seduced by a long history of fruitless and quarrelsome philosophical speculation. Bacon has an especial dislike for the baleful influence, still active at his time, of Plato and Aristotle. Their dogmatic preference for contemplation over action reflected contempt for the practical arts, a contempt much more harmful than noble. For it merely served to hide the real courses of nature from view, so that from Aristotle one hears "the voice of dialectics more often than the voice of nature" and in Plato one sees that "he infected and corrupted natural studies by his theology as much as Aristotle did by his dialectic."[2]

For Bacon, these defects of reason had first to be exposed and rooted out as far as possible before reason's true powers could be unleashed. Then, an entirely new science, based on careful induction and especially experimentation, could discover the latent actions of nature and bend them to human purposes. Human life needs tools for action, but from the ancient wisdom we got nothing but theological and metaphysical claptrap. Moreover, the ancients applied this intellectual junk to practical and political affairs, especially after Socrates, who was famous for having brought philosophy down from the heavens. But the ancients' concern for practical affairs was in fact impractical and served merely to fuel violent controversies about justice and the best regime, controversies that are inevitable when we are faced by material scarcity and a cosmos that is hostile to our wills and indifferent to our needs.

For Bacon, reason directed by new means and ends would endow human beings with powers over nature unimaginable by his contemporaries. He wasn't restrained in what he predicted. Bacon's new science would put nature on the rack: it gives up its secrets "when by art and the hand of man she is

[2] "***The*** Refutation of Philosophies" in *The Philosophy of Francis Bacon*, ed. Benjamin Farrington (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1964), pp. 112–15.

forced out of her natural state, and squeezed and moulded."[3] When the latent actions and structures of nature are then genuinely understood, he argued, the dreams of the alchemists really will come true: it will be possible to transform something not gold into the real McCoy.[4] And so it is: with atomic science it is possible today to turn mercury into gold, and that's no different in principle from turning oil into polyester cloth for a suit of clothes. Bacon did not blush at taking aim even at the corruptibility and mortality of the human body, the conquest of which he called the "noblest work" of natural philosophy.[5] Bacon's project was thus far more than a mere reformation of human reason and even more than the founding of a new intellectual or political order. For every founding prior to his own had been limited by something beyond the powers of the founder, whether it be nature, fortune, or God. With Bacon's project we encounter an altogether new horizon, one that forces a reconsideration of the words: "In the beginning . . ."

The Great Instauration and New Atlantis

It is fashionable now to have doubts about modern science and technology and to acknowledge that their blessings can be mixed. But even so, we entertain such thoughts from within a world already transformed, mostly for the better, by them: In our everyday lives we interact constantly with their products to the point of taking them for granted. Imagine if you will, what life must have been like before the discovery of anaesthesia or when women had lots of babies because so many newborns died. In making the case for his Great Instauration, Bacon

[3] ***Below***, p. 28.
[4] ***Novum*** *organum*, 2: 1–5, in *The Works of Francis Bacon*, ed. James Spedding, Robert Leslie Ellis, and Douglas Denon Heath, 14 vols. (London: Longman and Co., etc. 1857–74), hereafter BW, IV, 119–123.
[5] ***De*** *sapientia veterum* XI, BW, VI, 646, 721; below, pp. 21, 31–32.