

## FROM FRANCIS BACON, *INSTAURATIO MAGNA* OF 1605-1620

Since . . . satisfaction with the present induces neglect of provision [preparation] for the future, it becomes absolutely necessary, that the excess of honour and admiration with which our existing stock of inventions is regarded be . . . stripped off, and men be duly warned not to exaggerate or make too much of them. For let a man look carefully into all that variety of books with which the arts and sciences abound, he will find everywhere endless repetitions of the same thing, varying in the method of treatment, but not new in substance, insomuch that the whole stock, numerous as it appear at first view, proves on examination to be but scanty.

. . . Observe also, that if sciences of this kind had any life in them, that could never have come to pass which has been the case now for many ages — that they stand almost at a stay, . . . [and] what was a question once is a question still, and instead of being resolved by discussion is only fixed and fed; and all the tradition and succession of schools is still a succession of masters and scholars, not of inventors . . . [N.B. "inventor" = discoverer (in Latin *invenio*) not inventor in our modern sense.]

Some there are indeed who have committed themselves to the waves of experience, and almost turned mechanics; [N.B. "mechanic" = practical artisan] yet these again have in their very experiments pursued a kind of wandering inquiry, without any regular system of operations. And besides they have mostly proposed to themselves certain petty tasks, taking it for a great matter to work out some single discovery; — a course of proceeding at once poor in aim and unskillful in design.

As for those who have given the first place to Logic, . . . they have indeed most truly and excellently perceived that the human intellect left to its own course is not to be trusted . . .

For my own part at least, in obedience to the everlasting love of truth, I have committed myself to . . . the hope of providing at last for the present and future generations guidance more faithful and secure.

I, . . . dwelling purely and constantly among the facts of nature. . .