



The Advancement of Learning

Francis Bacon

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While he didn't exactly invent science, Francis Bacon is its best-known early promoter. The Advancement of Learning is his 1605 argument in favor of natural philosophy and inductive reasoning, and it is still vigorous and cogent today. Though using the language of Shakespeare, the book remains largely accessible to modern readers--still, a bit of classical knowledge is helpful. Shaking off the centuries-old domination of Aristotle, Bacon advocated building scientific theories on facts and observations rather than pure reason; little has changed in our approach to understanding the world since then. Of greatest interest to historians and philosophers of science, the book will also appeal to those curious about the underpinnings of today's naturalistic thinking. Bacon was an English philosopher, statesman, scientist, lawyer, jurist and author. He famously died of pneumonia contracted while studying the effects of freezing on the preservation of meat. He served both as Attorney General and Lord Chancellor of England. Although his political career ended in disgrace, he remained extremely influential through his works, especially as philosophical advocate and practitioner of the scientific method and pioneer in the scientific revolution. Bacon has been called the father of empiricism. His works established and popularized inductive methodologies for scientific inquiry, often called the Baconian method or simply, the scientific method. His demand for a planned procedure of investigating all things natural marked a new turn in the rhetorical and theoretical framework for science, much of which still surrounds conceptions of proper methodology today. His dedication probably led to his death, bringing him into a rare historical group of scientists who were killed by their own experiments. Bacon was knighted in 1603, created Baron Verulam in 1618, and Viscount St Alban in 1621; as he died without heirs both peerages became extinct upon his death.

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