**BACON'S ESSAYS**

**FRANCIS BACON (1561-1626)**

* Philosopher, scientist, and essayist
* Son of Nicholas Bacon, Lord Keeper of the Seal to Elizabeth I
* Educated at Trinity College, Cambridge
* Entered Gray’s Inn; practised law
* Ambitious man
* Enjoyed patronage of Earl of Essex
* Became MP in 1584
* Investigated the case against his own patron, leading to Essex’s execution in 1601

**BACON'S POLITICAL CAREER**

* Career bloomed during the reign of James I
* Became Attorney General, Lord Keeper of the Seal, and Lord Chancellor
* Not popular among peers
* Rival Edward Coke instigated a charge of corruption
* Dismissed from office, debarred from Parliament, briefly imprisoned in the Tower
* Retired into private life, devoted subsequent life to writing
* Died of pneumonia contracted while studying use of snow in preservation of meat

**ESSAYS**

* The Essayes or Counsels, Civil and Moral
* 1597: 10 essays
* 1612: 38 essays
* 1625: 58 essays
* Reflections and observations in the form of advice for living a successful life
* Wide range of topics: government, architecture, human behaviour
* Essays show acute intelligence and wit
* Incorporates numerous quotations from earlier writers

**THEMES OF THE ESSAYS**

* Some essays: universal concepts like truth, death, love, goodness, friendship, fortune, praise
* Others: controversial matters like religion, atheism, “True Greatness of Kingdoms and Estates,” custom and education, usury
* Others: envy, cunning, innovations, suspicion, ambition, praise, vainglory, vicissitudes of things

**FEATURES OF BACON'S ESSAYS**

* Adopted the term “essai” from Montaigne (1580), who wrote essays on friendship, love, death, morality
* Montaigne wrote informal essay, Bacon wrote formal
* Practical everyday philosophy
* Detached, epigrammatic style; presents finished ideas rather than exploring them
* Later essays more expanded
* Employs strategy of balance and opposition
* Impersonal, objective; studies the world rather than the self
* First writer to attend to the readers: wrote to inform young men of his class rather than for self-expression

**FRANCIS BACON**

**OF STUDIES**

* Education (studies) a major Renaissance concern
* Practical application of studies became recognized
* Studies became individual pursuit with rise of Protestantism

**USES OF EDUCATION**

* Delight: personal, private use
* Ornament: conversation with others
* Ability: judgment in business and pursuits
* Men with world experience can carry out plans, know practical circumstances
* Men who study are better able to understand political matters and assess problems’ gravity

**HOW NOT TO USE EDUCATION**

* Too much studying leads to laziness
* Overuse of knowledge in conversation is show-off
* Letting studies guide everything is scholarly, not practical
* Moderation is key
* Education must be supplemented by experience
* Natural abilities are enhanced by education; but education alone does not guide us in the world

**HOW TO USE STUDIES**

* Clever (dishonest) men condemn education
* Stupid men admire it
* Wise men use education as experience dictates
* The educated man should not:
  + Argue unnecessarily
  + Assume knowledge guarantees right behavior
  + Focus only on conversation
* How to read books:
  + Some books: read only in a cursory manner
  + Some: read without much thought
  + A few: "Chewed and Digested"—understood perfectly, used to guide behaviour
  + Some books can be read by others and notes substituted—except on important subjects

**EFFECTS OF EDUCATION**

* Reading: makes a well-rounded man
* Conversation: makes one think quickly
* Writing: makes one think with logic and reason
* Little writing? Need good memory
* Little conversation? Need quick wit
* Little reading? Pretend to know more than one does

**KINDS OF STUDIES AND THEIR USES**

* History: makes men wise
* Poetry: makes men clever
* Mathematics: intellectually sharp
* Logic and rhetoric: skilled in argument
* Studies mould character
* No problem of wit that cannot be fixed by appropriate study
* As right physical exercise cures illnesses, right study cures mental weaknesses:
  + Lack concentration: study mathematics
  + Trouble distinguishing ideas: study medieval philosophers
  + Can’t substantiate: study law
* Every mental defect can be cured by some study

**OF TRUTH**

* First essay in Bacon’s Essays
* Shows Renaissance spirit, rational and scientific method, interest in morality
* Insight into human nature, political intrigues, treachery

**KEY POINTS**

* Arresting opening: "What is Truth? said jesting Pilate; and would not stay for an answer."
* Bacon uses this to discuss the charms of lying

**PEOPLE'S ATTITUDE TO TRUTH**

* Reference to Pontius Pilate; some don’t care for truth or change opinions at will
* Some want freedom to act and think
* Ancient Sceptics doubted every belief; some still do

**WHY SOME DISLIKE TRUTH**

* People perversely attracted to lies
* Search for truth is hard work
* Truth, once found, curtails freedom
* Lucian: reasons why men love lies
  + Poets lie for pleasure
  + Merchants for advantage
  + But why love untruth for its own sake?

**TRUTH AND LIES**

* Truth: like bright daylight, exposes pretensions and triumphs
* Falsehood: like candlelight, makes triumphs look attractive
* Truth: like a pearl—good in daylight, not very expensive
* Falsehood: like a diamond or carbuncle—attractive, illusory, shine in changing light, more expensive
* "A mixture of lie doth ever add pleasure."
* Removing vain opinions, hopes, imaginations would make people "poor shrunken things"

**POETIC UNTRUTH**

* Clergymen call poetry “wine of devils”—it fills imagination with illusions
* Poetic untruth is not very harmful (only passes through mind); lies that "sink in" are harmful

**THE VALUE OF TRUTH**

* Only those who experience truth can value it
* Inquiry, knowledge, and belief in truth are greatest good
* Compared to stages of love: wooing, presence, enjoying

**DIVINITY OF TRUTH**

* God created: first senses, then reason, then spirit among mankind (truth)
* God breathed light first into matter, then into men, lastly into the chosen (truth)

**LUCRETIUS QUOTE**

* Pleasure in seeing errors from the "hill of Truth"
* Charity, trust in God, and Truth create heaven on earth

**TRUTH AND SOCIETY**

* Honest dealing denotes nobility even to liars
* Falsehood "like an alloy"—may help but debases
* Crooked deals: like a serpent
* Lying: worst vice—defies God, cowardly toward men
* Falsehood brings God's judgment

**OF LOVE**

* Bacon reflects on love, especially romantic love
* Contrasts love on stage (source of comedy, tragedy) with real life (causes mischief, harm)
* "The stage is more beholding to love than the life of man."
* Calls love weak and distracting, especially for the ambitious
* "Great spirits and great business do keep out this weak passion."
* Sometimes, even strong people fall: Marcus Antonius, Appius Claudius
* "Love can find entrance not only into an open heart, but also into a heart well fortified."

**EXCESS AND IRRATIONALITY**

* Love distorts judgment, causes extreme words and actions
* Lovers flatter more than the proud
* "Impossible to love and to be wise."
* Unreciprocated love leads to secret contempt from the beloved

**DANGERS OF LOVE**

* Those who overvalue romantic affection lose wealth and wisdom
* Love as "child of folly," often kindled in prosperity or adversity
* Should keep love separate from serious business

**TYPES OF LOVE**

* Nuptial (marital) love: foundation of mankind, supports society
* Friendly love: perfects mankind, adds depth and support
* Wanton (lustful) love: corrupts and debases

**OF REVENGE**

* Examines revenge's moral and psychological implications
* Revenge: natural but undermines justice and society
* Harms seeker, keeps wounds open, prevents healing

**REVENGE AS "WILD JUSTICE"**

* "Revenge is a kind of wild justice; which the more man’s nature runs to, the more ought law to weed it out."
* Revenge disrupts justice by bypassing law, leads to chaos

**LAW AND FORGIVENESS**

* "For as for the first wrong, it doth but offend the law; but the revenge of that wrong, putteth the law out of office."
* Law’s authority is undermined by revenge
* Forgiving shows moral superiority; wise leaders pardon and rise above revenge

**REVENGE AS WEAKNESS**

* "In taking revenge, a man is but even with his enemy; but in passing it over, he is superior."
* Forgiveness elevates, revenge drags down to enemy’s level
* Desire for revenge reflects lack of control; wisdom is in moving on

**IMPACT OF REVENGE**

* "A man that studieth revenge, keeps his own wounds green, which otherwise would heal, and do well."
* Fixating on revenge perpetuates suffering and blocks growth

**PUBLIC VS. PRIVATE REVENGE**

* Public revenge (e.g., for political figures): sometimes seen as just
* Private revenge: often fails, causes harm
* Public revenge may serve the greater good; private is driven by emotion, backfires