

Reading Assignment 13: Bacon's Epistemology

Assigned Reading

Bacon. *Novum Organon*.

- Book I. Aphorisms 1-3, 14-15, 19, 31, 39-44, 50, 100-103.
- Book II. Aphorisms 1, 11-13 (you may skim the long lists), 18, and 20.

Due Date

Please bring a typed, hard copy of your answers to class on Tuesday, February 21st, 2017.

Technical Requirements

Answer questions three, five, seven, and eight below. Together, your answers should not be longer than a single typed page. Remember to provide page numbers indicating which passages you are paraphrasing. For the remaining optional questions, please write down the page numbers on which the authors address the question.

Questions

1. Bacon claims, "the intellect needs [tools] as much as the hand does." What types of "tools" do you think Bacon is describing? Give an example.
2. In your own words, describe what Bacon argues that Aristotelian syllogisms often do not produce scientific knowledge.
3. What does Bacon mean by "idols of the mind?" In no more than a paragraph, explain why might Bacon have used the word "idol" in this context.
4. Drawing on previous assigned readings, give an example of what Bacon might call an idol of the theater.
5. What does Bacon think is more helpful than a well-designed instrument for understanding an object's microstructure? Given an example of an author whom we have studied who might have been inspired by Bacon's prescription for learning about an object's microstructure.
6. In your own words, explain what Bacon means when he claims, "experimentation hasn't yet become literate!"
7. According to Bacon, what is the aim of knowledge, and what two works are subordinate to acquiring knowledge? Use your own words.
8. In no more than a paragraph, explain what Bacon means by constructing tables of instances, tables of nearby absences, and tables of comparisons. Here, you should illustrate your claims using an example. Because Bacon explains how to construct these tables to discover the nature of heat, you may not use heat as your example.
9. Bacon uses his tables to make an inference about what heat is; he calls this the "first harvest" of his method. What is Bacon's conclusion?
10. Is Bacon's aim to investigate heat as we feel it? Why or why not?