

THE NEW ATLANTIS AND BACON'S POLITICAL PRAGMATISM

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In addition to the obvious objective of imagining a reality in which the Baconian method would find all the conditions for its development, which also includes all the benefits of its application without ties and barriers, in the *New Atlantis* of the English philosopher there are some layers that are difficult to decode. Considering the Christian nomenclature and the type of political organization of Bensalem, what we can conclude is that the political-religious substratum must be taken as a precise source to understand how these themes were concatenated in Bacon's philosophy. Stephen A. McKnight's daring proposal challenges us to think whether, in fact, what was bequeathed to us by most commentators on Bacon's work is sustainable. Howard White (1968) and Jerry Weinberger (1979 and 1985) accused Bacon of subverting Christian values, either to justify lust and materialism (first case) or to totalitarian control of knowledge (second case). More recently, Marina Leslie, David Innes, Denise Albanese and Amy Boesky have accused Bacon of inverting the spiritual world and the material world, promoting an intellectual imperialism. Mcknight reverses this trend by trying to show how religion is fundamental to guide knowledge in Bacon. Combining scientific achievements with divine providence, the *New Atlantis* would give a new dimension of humanity much less secular than the aforementioned scholars supposed.

In this work, we will try to show how *New Atlantis* exposes Bacon's political pragmatism and how the manipulation of religious vocabulary in the creation of Bensalem meets the rhetorical strategy of overcoming religious conflicts in a universe in which this absence of otherness allows the opening of an orderly path for scientific progress symbolized by the House of Solomon. It is not about making veiled criticisms of Christianity nor imagining a scientific future marked by religious ethics, on the contrary, the Baconian utopia replaces otherness in its legitimate place, that is, in the construction of knowledge, which, with the appropriate method (Baconian), will stay away from innocuous polemics.

Bacon's political pragmatism can be evidenced by studying a series of his *Essays*, notably "Of Unity of Religion". Let us highlight a passage in which Bacon states that *men create oppositions which are not; and put them into new terms so fixed, as whereas the*

*meaning ought to govern the term, the term in effect governeth the meaning*¹. There is in this passage the dimension of the danger of religious controversies: they contaminate the discourse in such a way that we can see there the rehearsal space for many other controversies that otherwise would not prosper.

It will be through a cross between the *Essays* and *New Atlantis* that we will try to show the construction of this pragmatic discourse in its political-religious dimensions (and rhetorical combativeness) as a way of guaranteeing scientific development, without vilifying religion, much less associating it in an indelible way with the progress of the knowledge.

¹ BACON, Francis – *Essays* – New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1908.