

Of Truth

WHAT is truth? said jesting Pilate, and would not stay for an answer. Certainly there be, that delight in giddiness, and count it a bondage to fix a belief; affecting free-will in thinking, as well as in acting. And though the sects of philosophers of that kind be gone, yet there remain certain discoursing wits, which are of the same veins, though there be not so much blood in them, as was in those of the ancients. But it is not only the difficulty and labor, which men take in finding out of truth, nor again, that when it is found, it imposeth upon men's thoughts, that doth bring lies in favor; but a natural, though corrupt love, of the lie itself. One of the later school of the Grecians, examineth the matter, and is at a stand, to think what should be in it, that men should love lies; where neither they make for pleasure, as with poets, nor for advantage, as with the merchant; but for the lie's sake. But I cannot tell; this same truth, is a naked, and open day-light, that doth not show the masks, and mummeries, and triumphs, of the world, half so stately and daintily as candle-lights. Truth may perhaps come to the price of a pearl, that showeth best by day; but it will not rise to the price of a diamond, or carbuncle, that showeth best in varied lights. A mixture of a lie doth ever add pleasure. Doth any man doubt, that if there were taken out of men's minds, vain opinions, flattering hopes, false valuations, imaginations as one would, and the like, but it would leave the minds, of a number of men, poor shrunken things, full of melancholy and indisposition, and unpleasing to themselves?

One of the fathers, in great severity, called poesy *vinum daemonum*, because it fireth the imagination; and yet, it is but with the shadow of a lie. But it is not the lie that passeth through the mind, but the lie that sinketh in, and settleth in it, that doth the hurt; such as we spake of before. But howsoever these things are thus in men's depraved judgments, and affections, yet truth, which only doth judge itself, teacheth that the inquiry of truth, which is the love-making, or wooing of it, the knowledge of truth, which is the presence of it, and the belief of truth, which is the enjoying of it, is the sovereign good of human nature. The first creature of God, in the works of the days, was the light of the sense; the last, was the light of reason; and his sabbath work ever since, is the illumination of his Spirit. First he breathed light, upon the face of the matter or chaos; then he breathed light, into the face of man; and still he breatheth and inspireth light, into the face of his chosen. The poet, that beautified the sect, that was otherwise inferior to the rest, saith yet excellently well: It is a pleasure, to stand upon the shore, and to see ships tossed upon the sea; a pleasure, to stand in the window of a castle, and to see a battle, and the adventures thereof below: but no pleasure is comparable to the standing upon the vantage ground of truth (a hill not to be commanded, and where the air is always clear and serene), and to see the errors, and wanderings, and mists, and tempests, in the vale below; so always that this prospect be with pity, and not with swelling, or pride. Certainly, it is heaven upon earth, to have a man's mind move in charity, rest in providence, and turn upon the poles of truth.

To pass from theological, and philosophical truth, to the truth of civil business; it will be acknowledged, even by those that practise it not, that clear, and round dealing, is the honor of man's nature; and that mixture of falsehoods, is like alloy in coin of gold and silver, which may make the metal work the better, but it embaseth it. For these winding, and crooked courses, are the goings of the serpent; which goeth basely upon the belly, and not upon the feet. There is no vice, that doth so cover a man with shame, as to be found false and perfidious. And therefore Montaigne saith prettily, when he inquired the reason, why the word of the lie should be such a disgrace, and such an odious charge? Saith he, If it be well weighed, to say that a man lieth, is as much to say, as that he is brave towards God, and a coward towards men. For a lie faces God, and shrinks from man. Surely the wickedness of falsehood, and breach of faith, cannot possibly be so highly expressed, as in that it shall be the last peal, to call the judgments of God upon the generations of men; it being foretold, that when Christ cometh, he shall not find faith upon the earth.

Summary

Man bears always a great curiosity to know what is truth? Bacon here, has given us a conception about truth in his essay which he begins with the reference of Pilate. Pilate, the ancient Roman Governor of Judaea, was however, indifferent in knowing the definition of truth, for he was skeptic. Certainly there are some people who delight in frequent changing their believe and they consider that to remain fixed in a belief is a type of mental captivity which hampers man's free-will in thoughts as well as in actions. There were some skeptic philosophers in Greece, who supported fickleness in belief. According to their view, whatever a man took to believe was true. Till now, some persons prefer alternation of belief.

It is very difficult and toilsome job to discover truth. But it is discovered that truth imposes upon man's thought. When a truth is discovered, man cannot change his opinion anymore, because he is bound by truth then. Man has a corrupt, but natural love for lie from the ancient time. The poets tell lies in order to make interesting their compositions and to give pleasure to his readers. The businessmen told lies to gain more commercial profit. But the case of man is much different Men tell lies for the lie's sake.

Truth is like broad day-light in which the things are seen in their original form and shape. But falsehood is like candle-light where the things lose their original glory and genuinely. Under this faint light, the artificial things show up very magnificent which they are not actually Truth gives greater pleasure when a lie has been added to it. That is why man cannot live without falsehood. If the malpractices like vain opinions, false hopes, wrong Valuations, are taken out of man's mind, his mind will be full of melancholy and illness. Man has a great love for lie that keeps him happy

An early writer of Church described [poetry](#) as the wine of the devils because it gives rise to fancies in the mind and encourages lies Poetry tells lies which are received by the mind and then forgotten and so, it does not hurt us for they do not settle down in the mind. But such harm is done by those lies which sink into the mind and settle down there.

The man who understand truth, realize also the value of it. Truth alone is capable of judging its nature or defining itself. The inquiry of truth is the love-making of it, the knowledge of truth is the presence of it, and the belief of truth is the enjoying of it. These three ideas are taught by truth itself. Truth is the supreme good of human nature.

God has created in his six working days all the creatures. – inanimate as well as animate. The first thing God created was the light and the final thing. He created was the rational faculty which he bestowed upon man. In leisure, God began to illuminate the minds of men by grace of divine truths. First God infused light upon the face of matter or chaos. Then he infused light into the face of man. Even now and always he inspires light into the face of that person whom He gives special favour.

The poet Lucretius' observation was excellent the greatest pleasure for a man was the realization of truth and not any pleasure of the world is comparable to it. Standing upon the vantage-ground of truth, a man can best see the errors, wanderings, lies, follies and foibles prevailing in the world. The outlook of this man should be replete with pity, not with pride or arrogance. All the reasonings of human beings should be based upon truth

Not only theological and philosophical truth, the truth of everyday social life is much important. When we go to deal with men, we should follow clear and direct way of dealing, because clear-cut and straightforward manner of conduct is the supreme honour of men's nature. Men generally admix falsehood with truth to gain advantages easily. But the mixture of falsehood debases his humanity and lowers his degree. Falsehood brings man disgrace and

odium. Montaigne said rightly that, in telling a lie, man is brave towards God and a coward towards men. It is because man has no courage to tell a lie to his brethren.

The wickedness of falsehood and loss of faith will come under the penalty on the Doomsday when God will appeal to call all human beings for the final judgement. In far-off future, when Christ will come on the second Dooms –day, he shall not find men’s belief in God.

“Of Truth” Explanations

1. **“What is truth’? said jesting Pilate, and would not stay for an answer.”**

It is an eternal query what truth is. Men are pursuit to know truth from the ancient time, but hitherto they cannot find out the definition of truth. They went on investigating from various corner, searched many books, many doctrines, logic, but yet failed to discover truth. At last they cling to an idea that truth cannot be discovered it is unattainable. Actually, men have undergone simply a cursory quest for truth. It is not easy to discover truth, moreover it is a toilsome and mammoth task to discover it. Men do not possess the mind to strive for truth. Not only that men do not care properly to know it. Men love lies more than truth and love to change their very opinions. If truth is discovered, it will act as a kind of restraint upon the minds of men. Then men cannot do according to his own whim. That is why each and every man remains indifferent to know what truth is. To give this idea Bacon cited the example of Pilate, the ancient Roman Governor of Judaea, who is not an exception to common human nature and who acts here as a representative of mankind. He also asked the definition of truth, but in a light-hearted manner. Bacon explains that people generally get much pleasure in frequent changing of their opinions. They think truth a captivity which affects free will in thinking as well as in acting. They aim at complete and unrestricted freedom of thought, opinion and action. So, when they search for truth, they only show a mere cursory quest for it, just like Pilate.

Bacon attempts to test, refine and bring to the perfection, first, man’s conceptions and then, human nature itself. Here, too, Bacon first cited an example of individual and then used it to all human beings. “What is truth?”- is an excerpt from **the Bible: John 18.38**. It is very difficult to decide why Pilate was perhaps justified in not waiting for the answer to his question. This effort of the human spirit to fight the fears and limitations of the human condition may perhaps rank as the noblest expression of Bacon’s philosophic mind. There is a slight touch of obscurity here for the uninitiated reader.

2. **“But I cannot tell : this same truth is a naked and open day light, that doth not show the masques and mummeries and triumphs of the world half so stately and daintily as candle-lights.”**

Human beings are somehow or other attracted by lies. They have a natural, though corrupt, love for lies. Poets make use of lies in their compositions in order to cater pleasure to readers. Businessmen tell lies for gaining more commercial profits. But why common people tell lies for the lie’s sake is not clear. It is the common habit of people to hide their real face and figure and character under false hood. Lie hides the original matter of the things and shows what is artificial. Men know well the greatness of truth, yet they follow lies and use masques, mummeries and triumphs, Masque is an entertainment consisting of dancing and other diversions of performers whose faces are disguised in masks. Mummery is also a popular, primitive entertainment in which the performers make sports and gestures without speaking, Triumphs are magnificent because pompous shows are provided to people for amusement. All these are the various types of false hood which hides the genuine shape. It is the difference between truth and lie. Truth is like open daylight while lie is like the faint and dim light of the candle. The faint light of candle shows up the cheap and artificial things very

magnificent and attractive. But in daylight the original shape is seen and it shows things what they are. Sun is sublime, Sun-shine is sublime and so is truth. There is nothing superior to truth, nothing brighter than truth.

The passage gives expression to ideas which are noble and worthy of the highest appreciation. Bacon relates truth as stable, pure and serene. He gives here, vivid simile and metaphor in order to elucidate his ideas. The comparison between truth and daylight and between die and candle-light is excellent and remarkable. Bacon is right that truth is not so alluring as a lie or falsehood. The sentences are written in compact and terse style of which Bacon is a master.

3. **“Truth may perhaps come to the price of a pearl, that showeth best by day, but it will not rise to the price of a diamond or carbuncle, that showeth best in varied lights.”**

Bacon points out that truth, in comparison with lie and falsehood, is more stable, pure and serene. Truth is like clear, open daylight which does not show the masques, mummeries and triumphs of the world as so magnificent and attractive as candle lights show them. Yet, people follow the path of falsehood. It is because falsehood hides the original form and shows what is artificial, just like candlelight shows up the simple things the most attractive and magnificent. But truth is like open daylight always showing things in their original form. Nothing is comparable to truth in its sublimity, purity and sanctity. Truth is like pearl which is seen to the best advantage in day-light. Falsehood is like diamond or carbuncle which is seen best in varied lights. Truth is one and always the same. It always appears with its original form and never hides itself in masks. Though the price of pearl is lower than that of diamond or carbuncle, but pearl is more sublime, pure and holy than these precious stones which like falsehood assumes various forms in varied lights. Diamond or carbuncle becomes more attractive at night and thus distracts the belief of the people. That is why, truth is always compared to a pearl, the lustre of which can best be appreciated in daylight and it never be compared to a diamond or a carbuncle which can be best admired in the artificial light of candles and lamps. Truth lacks the charm of verity which falsehood has. So truth is indispensable for glorification and purification of human life.

The passage gives expression to ideas which are noble and worthy of the highest appreciation. There is a didactic tone submerged here. The object of the writer is to instill into the mind of his readers a love of truth Bacon gives us very vivid similes and metaphors in order to illustrate his ideas. The comparison between truth and pearl and between falsehood and carbuncle is excellent and notable. The sentences are written in condensed and aphoristic style of which Bacon is the master. Above all, the passage epitomizes the theme: it does not matter, whether the price is high or low; but it is the genuineness that matters.

4. **“A mixture of a lie doth ever add pleasure.”**

Bacon points out that there is a giddiness in man's nature. Men get more delight in changing their opinions now and then. They do not want to remain fixed on any truth Human mind has a corrupt love for lies. It seems that human beings are somehow or other attracted by lies. Lies told by poets in their composition add delight and taste. The traders tell lies to gain more. But why people take the shelter of lies for lie's sake is not clear. They feel a certain proneness to lies. Even Bacon is unable to explain it. It is perhaps the main fact that truth gives more pleasure when a lie is added to it. People enjoy much delight and pleasure in admixing falsehood with truth. Human mind is fond of gain opinions, false hopes. In other words, human beings retain falsehood for whole time. If the vain opinions, flattering hopes, wrong judgments were to be taken out of human mind, his mind would be full of melancholy and illness. All these different types of falsehood give people a strange kind of pleasure and

keep them happy. Bacon warns us at last. Though falsehood gives our mind pleasure, it is harmful some time. Lies which are received by the mind and then forgotten cannot harm us. But lies which sink into the mind and settle down there forever, hurt us.

The sentence reveals Bacon's wisdom and gives expression to ideas which are noble and worthy of the appreciation. Nobody will disgrace with Bacon when he says falsehood has a pleasing effect upon a human being. This sentence shows Bacon's gift of compression. It is epigrammatic and can be used as a quotation in need.

5. **“For a lie faces God, and shrinks from man”.**

Truth, in comparison with falsehood, is more stable, pure and serene. It shows us the path of victory to follow. It is so clear as open daylight is, it is so graceful and dignified as a pearl is. Nothing is comparable to truth in its sublimity, purity and sanctity. Yet people constantly tell lies and follow the path of falsehood. Human beings have a natural and corrupt love for lies. With the passing of time, they became too much desperate and reckless in telling lies. They even ignore the honour and dignity of God. They tell hundreds of lies in their everyday life but take oath in the name of God and thus they defy God. But human beings never tell lies to his fellowmen. They cannot trust his brethren. They always get afraid of being unlocked of their secrecy and that is why they cannot tell the truth to their fellow men so desperately and courageously as they tell the lies facing God. In this connection Bacon cited Montaigne who said very logically and aptly that, in telling a lie, man is brave towards God and a coward towards men. A liar does not have the courage to tell the truth to his fellow human beings, but he has the courage to tell a lie defying God. To tell a lie men come face to face of God, but remain far away from man. Here lies the paradox. Bacon feels that the whole world has been submerged under the wickedness of falsehood. In far-off future, when Christ will come on this earth on the second Doomsday, he will certainly not find man's faith on God.

The sentence is the fruit of high meditation. It gives expression to ideas which are noble and worthy of the highest appreciation. Bacon is right that while a man tells a lie, his cowardliness is revealed. It is an illustration of Bacon's gift of compression. It also implies Bacon's love of quotations. The quotation from Montaigne is very effective for the purpose for which it has been introduced: “For a lie faces God, and shrinks from man”

6. **“Certainly it is heaven upon earth to have a man's mind move in charity rest in providence, and turn upon the poles of truth”.**

Bacon is here enunciating a noble principle. He uplifts the ideas of charity and truth and teaches us to submit whole-heartedly to the will of God. He relates truth as stable, pure, and sacred. The man who can be able to realize truth, he can feel the heavenly bliss. The greatest pleasure for a man is the realization of truth. Nothing is comparable to the pleasure that comes out of truth. It is a pleasure to stand upon the shore and to see ships tossed upon the sea, it is also a pleasure to stand in front of window of a castle and to see a battle and the adventures thereof. But no pleasure is comparable to the standing upon the vantage ground of truth and to survey the errors, falsehoods, mistakes and injustices prevailing in the world. While dealing with truth man's outlook should be full of pity. All the reasonings of human being should be based upon truth. Human beings will be capable of enjoying the bliss of paradise in spite of staying on earth if their mind become replete with kindness, humanity faith on God and, above all, truth.

“Bacon here says that a man's mind should move in charity' as the universe is moved by the 'primum mobile': rest in providence as the universe rests in infinite space and revolve around truth as the spheres, revolve around the celestial poles.” It expresses the ideas which are

noble and worthy of the highest appreciation. The passage also illustrates Bacon's gift of compression. A great sublime ideal is laid within these few words.

7. **“and that mixture of falsehood is like alloy in coin of gold and silver, which may make the metal work the better, but it embaseth it”.**

People have a common proneness and inclination to falsehood. It is a corrupt love for lies. The fact is not clear why men give more preference to lies than truth, although they know it very well that truth will show the right path to victory. Truth gives more pleasure when a lie is added to it. If the notion of false hopes, vain opinions and wrong judgments is cut-off from man's mind, he will feel himself miserable. Falsehood gives people a strange kind of pleasure. But it can never be ignored that, and even people who themselves do not practice truth will admit that direct and straightforward conduct shows honorable and noble quality of human nature. Yet men go to mix lies with truth to gain more conveniences in practical life. But falsehood undoubtedly lowers and degrades a man. The mixture of falsehood is like alloy which is mixed into gold or silver. The admixture of an alloy, though makes the metal more flexible and easier to work, but it debases the substance. To strengthen the fact, Bacon compares falsehood and dishonest practices with the crooked and twisting movements of the snakes. As the serpent follows the winding way, not straight, it is the lowest creature that moves upon its belly. So if a man tells lies and follows the crooked ways of society, he will remain in the lowest condition than others.

This passage gives expression to ideas which are noble and worthy of the highest appreciation. The object of the writer is to instill into the mind of the readers a kind of love for truth and a kind of contempt for falsehood. Here lies Bacon's compact and condensed style. Bacon's comparison here, is excellent. The alloy makes the metal work better, but it lessens the value of the metal. Similarly, falsehood may be useful from the practical and business point of view, but it lowers the dignity of the individual who tells a lie.

Style of Writing

Francis Bacon was a prose writer of renaissance age, a great philosopher and pioneer of scientific thoughts. He had set some goals in his life. One is to serve his country, second is to serve the church and the other is to learn the truth.

His interest in his science and reasoning lead him to write critically about the aspects of life. He wrote many essays which till today receives appreciation and is up to date. Being an essayist his aim was to share the wisdom of his life.

Bacon's style is most remarkable for his preciseness. He has a great command of condensation of the sentences. Each sentence of his essay contains multiple meanings and references. He combines wisdom with brevity and his short, pithy sayings become famous as mottoes and useful expressions.

His writing style is aphoristic which means a compact, condensed and epigrammatic style of writing. He was expert in expressing truth in a few possible words with beauty. His essays are an example of this aphoristic style. His essay "*Of Truth*" has many examples of the aphoristic style.