

Bacon as a Moral and Utilitarian Philosopher

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Discuss Francis Bacon as a moral and utilitarian philosopher based on your reading of his essays.

Francis Bacon (1561-1626) is the most remarkable essayist of the Elizabethan era. His essays are a "handbook" of practical wisdom. They are enriched with aphorisms. They offer timeless wisdom. Bacon's essays blend moral guidance with utilitarian principles. Let's explore key points that highlight Bacon's contributions as a moral and utilitarian philosopher.

Moral Statement: In "Of Great Place," Bacon starts with the idea that men in a great place are servants three times. They are the servants of the state, fame, and business. He calls it a strange desire to seek power and to lose liberty. Then, he shows us that in a great place, there is the freedom to do good and evil.

However, he suggests that we should not follow the evil one. Then Bacon suggests that men in authority should work not only for the betterment of the public but also for their own status. It is purely utilitarian advice. It surely holds a compromise between morality and worldly success.

The Disadvantage of Impassionate Love: Bacon considers love as a 'child of folly.' In his essay "Of Love" he says:

It is impossible to love and to be wise.

In this essay, Bacon shows the disadvantages of mad love. He tells us about love's harmful effects one by one. First of all, among all the great and worthy hearts, there is hardly anyone who has been tempted to folly. Secondly, the passion for love is so strong that it can enter a well-fortified heart.

Thirdly, he comments that it is impossible to love and to be wise at the same time. Here, he mentions Helen to impart practical wisdom. Fourthly, love brings trouble in men's lives. It makes them such that they can no way be true of their own ends. Despite those negative aspects of love, Bacon finishes his essay with moral teaching.

A Forgiving Attitude: In the essay "Of Revenge," Bacon shows a certain high morality by saying:

Revenge is a kind of wild justice.

He feels dignity in forgiving one's enemy. But then he says that revenge can save one's skin from the hands of the law. The above idea bears testimony that he is a utilitarian person.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Marriage and Single Life: The essay "Of Marriage and Single Life" deals with both the advantages and the disadvantages of married and unmarried life. The man who has a family to maintain cannot undertake big tasks. He wishes to lead a life of security. At the same time, a family man is in a financial liability. Marriage also imposes certain restraints on a man's freedom. And yet a man who has a wife and children is affectionate and less cruel than a single man.

On the other hand, an unmarried man can grant great benefits to the public. Moreover, he is a good friend, employer, and servant, although he may not be a good citizen. Bacon tells us who needs to marry and who needs not. Now, he suggests that a clergyman should remain single for the interest of his spiritual duty.

Utilitarian Philosophy about Study: Bacon's approach to studies is also purely utilitarian. In his essay "Of Studies," he does not highlight study for its own sake. Study provides a man practical experience. According to Bacon,

Reading maketh a full man, conference a ready man and writing an exact man.

Wise Thinking about Truth:

In his essay "Of Truth," Bacon appreciates truth and wishes people to speak the truth. He warns human beings against the punishment for the liar on judgment day. At the same time, he considers a lie to be an

'alloy'

that increases the strength of Gold. The lie is necessary for survival on Earth. He says:

A lie doth ever add pleasure.

From the above discussion, we can say that in modern civilization, Bacon's essays can show us the right path to living a simple and successful life. His writings show the way to improve and develop in all aspects of life.