

Of Great Place Themes

Writer: Francis Bacon | Generated: Jan 26, 2026

Power and Servitude: Francis Bacon shows that power is not freedom but a form of servitude. A person in a high position becomes thrice a servant, a servant to the state, to fame, and to business. In such a condition, one loses personal freedom. Every action and decision becomes controlled by others' expectations. Bacon says, "It is a strange desire, to seek power and to lose liberty." That is, man desires to rule over others, but in doing so, loses control over himself. Thus, even at the height of power, true freedom is lost, and life becomes a deeper bondage.

Ambition and Morality: According to Bacon, ambition is a natural human instinct, but if it is not guided by morality, it becomes dangerous. People often forget honesty in their desire for power. He says that the true purpose of power should be the welfare of others. His famous line, "Power to do good is the true and lawful end of aspiring," expresses that genuine ambition is the desire to do good. Bacon warns that when power is used for selfish ends, it leads to destruction; but when it is used for the good of humanity, it becomes a mark of true greatness.

Integrity and Corruption: In this essay, Bacon gives the highest importance to integrity. He says that corruption is the greatest enemy of power. An honest leader must not only keep himself pure but also ensure honesty among those under his authority. Bacon advises, "Do not only bind thine own hands, or thy servants' hands, from taking, but bind the hands of suitors also, from offering." This means a leader should neither take bribes nor allow opportunities for others to give them. He adds that corruption is not only material but also moral. Changing opinions without reason or acting for personal gain is also a form of corruption. Therefore, true leadership lies in moral firmness, transparency, and a sense of responsibility.

Honor and True Greatness: According to Bacon, it is not position but character that makes a person truly great. He says, "A place showeth the man," meaning that position reveals and tests a person's true nature. Some people become better through power, while others become corrupt. True honor comes from virtue, justice, and humility, not from rank or title. Bacon says, "Honor is, or should be, the place of virtue," meaning that the seat of honor should always rest upon moral virtue. The one who remains just, honest, and humane even while holding power is truly great. Therefore, real greatness lies not in gaining power, but in preserving humanity within power.