

# On the occasion of Francis Bacon's 458th birthday

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*This post was originally a thread on Twitter.*

Today is Francis Bacon's 458th birthday. Let's celebrate with a selection of neat quotes from the great inductivist and proto-empiricist. These are mostly about the scientific method, what Bacon thought was wrong with the natural philosophy of his time, and his understanding of proper reasoning from evidence.

"From a few examples and particulars [. . .] they flew at once to the most general conclusions [. . .]. But this was not the natural history and experience that was wanted; far from it. And besides, that flying off to the highest generalities ruined all." (NOB1, CXXV)

"Now my method, though hard to practise, is easy to explain; and it is this. I propose to establish progressive stages to certainty." (NO, Preface)

"[T]hen [. . .] only, may we hope well of the sciences, when in a just scale of ascent, and by successive steps not interrupted or broken, we rise from particulars to lesser axioms; and then to middle axioms, one above the other; and last of all to the most general." (NOB1, CIII)



"Nothing duly investigated, nothing verified, nothing counted, weighed, or measured, is to be found in natural history: and what in observation is loose and vague, is in information deceptive and treacherous." (NOB1, XCVIII)

"[A]ll the truer kind of interpretation of nature is effected by instances and experiments fit and apposite; wherein the sense decides touching the experiment only, and the experiment touching the point in nature and the thing itself." (NOB1, L)

"And this induction must be used not only to discover axioms, but also in the formation of notions." (NOB1, CV)

"[This Instauration is] by no means forgetful of the conditions of mortality and humanity, (for it does not suppose that the work can be altogether completed within one generation, but provides for its being taken up by another). . ." (The Great Instauration, Preface)

Bonus quote: "I remember that this was one of the reasons for which you told me one day you regretted the death of Baron Verulam [Bacon], to see him so careful and so liberal in particular experiments." (Letter from Christiaan Huygens to Descartes, 1642)

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