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The New Atlantis

Sir Francis Bacon

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Sir Francis Bacon's "The New Atlantis" is a utopian novel about a mythical land called Bensalem, the inhabitants live happily with the sciences. "The New Atlantis" was published in 1627, the year after the Sir Francis Bacon's death. In "The New Atlantis," Bacon focuses on the duty of the state toward science, and his projections for state-sponsored research anticipate many advances in medicine and surgery, meteorology, and machinery. Although "The New Atlantis" is only a part of his plan for an ideal commonwealth, this work does represent Bacon's ideological beliefs. The inhabitants of Bensalem represent the ideal qualities of Bacon the statesman: generosity and enlightenment, dignity and splendor, piety and public spirit. These were the ideal qualities which Bacon wanted to see in 17th century England. In "The New Atlantis," Bacon breaks from Plato, Aristotle and other ancient writers by insisting that humans do not need to aspire to fewer desires because the extraordinary advances of science would make it possible to appease bodily desires by providing material things that would satisfy human greed. For Bacon there is no reason to waste time and energy trying to get human beings to rise to a higher moral state. Ultimately, Bacon clearly sees the advances of science as the best way of increasing humanity's control over nature and providing for the comfort and convenience of all people, and England's Royal Society and similar organizations dedicated to scientific progress are generally regarded as embodying Bacon's utopian vision. The utopia of "The New Atlantis" underscores the idea that science will solve the evils of this world.

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