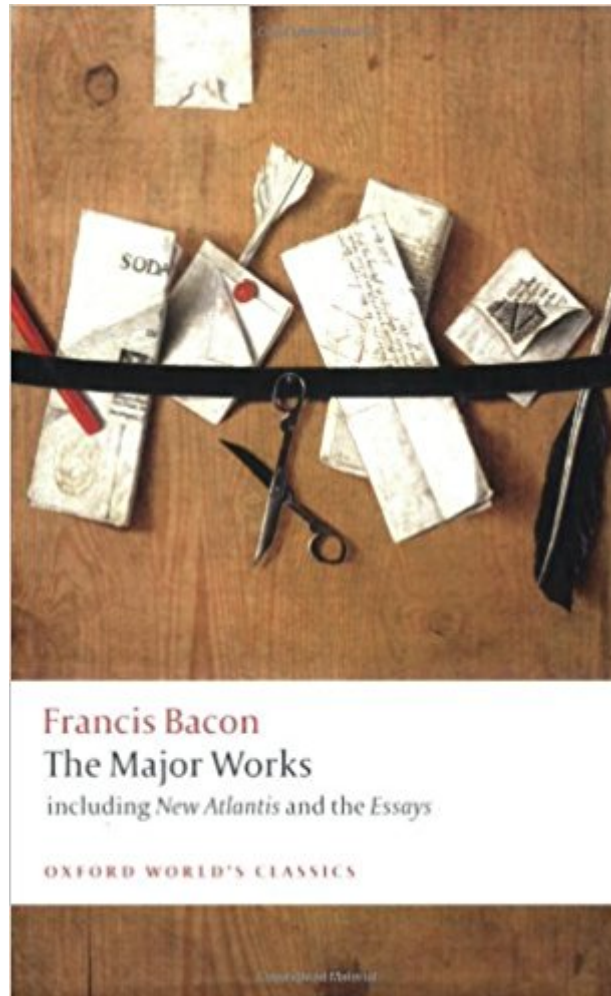




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Francis Bacon: The Major Works (Oxford World's Classics)



Synopsis

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Customer Reviews

I actually recommended this edition in another review over the Penguin collection of Bacon's essays - and I still do: there is more here, and it is cheaper. But this is still one of the most horrible pieces of scholarship I have ever come across. Vickers, the editor, has decided that there is absolutely no distinction between what a reader actually needs to know and what Brian Vickers happens to know. Before I give some examples, here is the editor defending himself in the Preface: "Many of Bacon's words have totally changed their meaning since he wrote, and not to be aware of their intended sense means that readers would receive at best a vague impression." Now, let me give an example of his helpful elucidations. I am choosing a passage literally at random. Here is first sentence of "Of Death." "Men fear Death, as children fear to go in the dark; and as that natural fear in

children is increased with tales, so is the other. Certainly, the contemplation of death, as the wages of sin and passage to another world, is holy and religious; but the fear of it, as a tribute due unto nature, is weak. How many footnotes does that passage seem like it requires? Perhaps one, two at most? Vickers gives us six. He helpfully explains that "go" can also mean "walk" - which certainly opened up the entire passage for me. He cites a scholarly paper that analyzes Bacon's use of the word "death" (I'll go right out and read that one); he explains every possible allusion that the passage might contain, and also points out that "tribute" means "something owing." I want to quote one more example, to show how seriously pathological this guy is.

I want to echo and expand upon Gulley Jimson's points about Brian Vickers' insane butchery of Bacon's text. As other reviews have pointed out, there are 500 pages of Bacon here and 300 pages of small font apparatus. The selection of Bacon is as thorough as one will find in a cheap paperback edition, though the decision to entirely omit Bacon's Latin work is misguided at best. A selection of Bacon that does not include *Novum Organum* cannot accurately be titled "The Major Works." However, since this edition contains *The Advancement of Learning*, the complete *Essays*, and the *New Atlantis*, it is useful to anyone looking for a basic Bacon. If you are looking for a particular work, you would do better to buy a different edition (the Oxford Francis Bacon edition of *Advancement*, the Penguin or OFB *Essays*, the other Oxford *New Atlantis*). However, as I've been reading through the *Essays*, I've found myself more and more frustrated by Vickers' ridiculous annotations. Maybe one in forty pertains to something that really requires footnoting. The real problem is that the excessive annotation seriously impacts the readability of the text. Almost every sentence includes a footnote, and often more than one. The result is that the visual field of the text is heavily studded by the little bullets that Oxford uses to mark annotations. It's very distracting. I'd compare it to how reading a book that someone else has underlined has a hard to explain but clear impact on one's ability to read. The other problem is that this incessant annotation makes Vickers the editor who cried "footnote!". I'm sure there are enlightening footnotes buried here, but the intolerable uselessness of most of them has made it so that I have largely decided to leave off consulting the apparatus altogether.

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