OF STATUES AND VINES: FRANCIS BACON'S *NEW ATLANTIS* AND THE QUESTION OF PERSUASION

DESPRE STATUI ŞI LUJERE DE VIȚĂ: *NOUA ATLANTIDĂ* ŞI PROBLEMA FORMĂRII CONVINGERILOR

Sorana CORNEANU
University of Bucharest, Romania
soranacorneanu@yahoo.com

Abstract:
In De augmentis scientiarum *(1623), Francis Bacon developed his discussion of "poesy" first broached in the earlier English version of the tract,* The Advancement of Learning *(1605), and explained in more detail the partition of that realm of learning into narrative, dramatic and parabolical types of poesy. In this paper I discuss Bacon's* The New Atlantis *(1627) from the point of view of this partition, and draw attention to the topic of* persuasion*, which is pertinent to all the types of poesy, but also, in a wider sense, to Bacon's views about the transmission of natural philosophical knowledge and the epistemology of natural philosophical method. Across these domains, the question of persuasion, or else the question of the formation, manipulation and transmission of beliefs, governs a cluster of themes which include those of authority, credulity, education and reformation. In all these domains, Bacon advocated a dynamic, fruit-bearing approach to knowledge, in contrast with a growth-blocking embracing of authority, represented, respectively, by the eloquent images of* the vine *and* the statue*. I would like to suggest that, by looking at* The New Atlantis *from the perspective of Bacon's more general reflections on these themes, this text may be seen as a parable about the nature of persuasion itself. This will also be to argue for the cross-fertilization in the late Renaissance between the fields of literature and science*[1].

Key words: *Bacon, education, knowledge, New Atlantis, parable.*
Cuvinte cheie: *Bacon, educație, cunoaştere, Noua Atlantidă, parabolă.*

Introduction: *The New Atlantis* as poesy

According to the divisions of the realm of knowledge which Francis Bacon proposed in his programmatic *Advancement of Learning* (1605), History has reference to Memory, Poesy, to Imagination, and Philosophy, to Reason. [1] In the revised and enlarged Latin edition of the same work, *De augmentis scientiarum* (1623), Bacon explains that this division mirrors the workings of the human mind in its various activities: the images of the individual things received through the senses and stored in the (passive) memory are subsequently subjected to the mind's "review and ruminat[ion]" which can take several forms: if it "simply rehearses them", this is the work of Memory; if it "makes fanciful imitations of them", this is the work of Imagination; and if it "analyses and classifies them", this is the work of Reason. [2] Among the realms of knowledge commanded by these activities of the mind, the natural place of *The New Atlantis* (1627) would be under Poesy and Imagination. Indications about the specific kind of "fanciful imitation" that it might represent are in Bacon's description of the main species of poesy. There are three such

---

[1] Research for this paper has been partially supported by the UEFISCSU grant no. 871/2009 [code 1980] for the research project entitled *The Cultural Institution of Literature from Early to Late Modernity in British Culture.*

species: narrative poesy, which is a "mere imitation of History", although with an addition of "a more ample greatness, a more perfect order, and a more beautiful variety" than can be found in real life; dramatic poesy, which is "History made visible", representing actions on a stage "as if they were present"; and parabolical poesy, which is "typical History", whereby "ideas which are objects of the intellect are represented in forms that are objects of the sense" (*historia cum typo, quae intellectualia deducit ad sensum*). [3]

Bacon nowhere makes it clear what kind of poetic history *The New Atlantis* is, but it may be conjectured that, on its various levels, it illustrates all the three species. Within its own texture, it includes episodes of *narrative poesy*, such as the story about the institution of Bensalem's laws of secrecy in the distant past, thanks to the wise ruler Salomana, as well as episodes of *dramatic poesy*, such as the visually gripping story of Bensalem's evangelization, following the miraculous apparition of the great pillar of light during Apostolic times. The borderline between these two species of poesy is nevertheless thin: the pillar of light episode is also meant as a narrative about the Christian foundations of the Bensalemite society, while the story of its polity and laws of secrecy also has dramatic qualities, especially in the part depicting the establishment and agenda of Saloman's House (alternatively called Solomon's House or the College of the Six Days' Works). The latter leaves the auditors, in a dramatically appropriate way, "astonished to hear so strange things so probably told". [4] A similar interweaving of the narrative and the dramatic is at play in the other two major episodes of the text, which shift the focus from the past to the present: the depiction of Bensalemite mores, including the emblematic feast of the family and Joabin the Jew's relation about the chaste minds of the island's inhabitants, and the appearance and speech of the Father of Solomon's House, who recounts the end, instruments, employments and rites of the Society. These episodes merge, again, the quality of narrative depiction of the excellences of the unknown island and the dramatic quality of eloquent images.

It is worth at this point to briefly signal the relevance to these poetic types of Bacon's discussion of the art of rhetoric. The office of rhetoric is "to apply and recommend the dictates of reason to imagination, in order to excite the appetite and the will". Rhetoric has thus an essentially moral function, which in fact answers the ordinarily corrupt state of the passionate side of man's mind. Were the affections of man naturally obedient to reason, there would be no need of "persuasions and insinuations" whereby images of the true good could be given "access to the mind". But the affections are in a state of disorder and "sedition", and thus they are apt to engulf the imagination and make reason "captive and servile". The role of rhetoric is "to win the imagination from the affections' part, and contract a confederacy between the reason and imagination against them". It can do that by evoking "pictures of virtue and goodness" which are made "present" by the force of eloquence, so that they can compellingly fill the imagination (*impleant phantasiam fortius*) and thus win it over to the side of reason. [5] Such views of the office of rhetoric, let us note, are typical of humanist defenses of poetry. To take the most famous English example, Sir Philip Sidney's *Defence of Poetry* (1595) similarly assigns poetry a high moral role, described in terms of an ordering of the soul ("this purifying of wit, this enriching of memory, enabling of judgment, and enlarging of conceit"), and attributed to its capacity of imparting "true lively knowledge" by means of its specific craft of forging "speaking pictures" which can "strike, pierce" or "possess the sight of the soul". [6] The eloquent, speaking pictures of rhetoric made their way into the Renaissance art of memory, too, whose moral and sometimes magical function also relied on the energetic efficacy of its *imagines agentes.* [7]

Such rhetorically and morally effective images are also at the core of Bacon's narrative and dramatic species of poesy. The narrative, which crafts images with a surplus of greatness, order and variety compared to what can be found in real history, in fact answers the human mind's desire for this kind of morally augmented reality. It "raises the mind and carries it aloft, accommodating the shows of things to the desires of the mind", and conduces thus not only to delight, but also to magnanimity and morality. The dramatic, which adds the quality of visual presence to the elements of real history, is also a "means of educating men's minds to virtue". It can do that thanks to the same rhetorical capacity of "possessing" the soul: it acts like a musical instrument "by which men's minds may be played upon". [8] Thanks to their gripping nature, the poetic images work their "persuasions and insinuations" on the human mind towards the better teaching of virtue.

Such a representation of the work of persuasion is apt to recall the famous "encomium to Socrates" uttered by an Alcibiades inebriated with both wine and philosophy at the end of the *Symposium*. From Alcibiades' point of view, Socrates is able to act like a flute player, who can "cast his spell on people" even without instruments, but by the power of words alone. Socratic persuasion does not rely on sounds or images, but the (preliminary) effect of his nagging questions is similar to that of the muses: his auditors are "transported, and completely possessed", and feel they have no choice but to follow him. Alcibiades' discipleship is nevertheless short lived, the spell is powerful only as long as it is fuelled by Socrates' presence, and "the moment I leave his side, I go back to my old ways". On the other hand, we learn that Socrates himself underwent a process of persuasion, when exposed to Diotima's teaching about the nature, power and rites of Love. Socrates ends his speech with a reference to the transforming powers of persuasion: "This, Phaedrus and the rest of you, was what Diotima told me. I was persuaded. And once persuaded, I try to persuade others too…". [9] Diotima had taken Socrates through the same kind of disturbing examination which Socrates himself has learned how to use and she had opened up to him the road to true understanding. Socrates was persuaded in a way in which Alcibiades is not, although there is persuasion of some other kind working on Alcibiades as well, at the level where he can feel the "sting" of philosophy, although he remains unable to pursue its road.

The Socrates-Alcibiades episodes of the *Symposium* indicate that this dialogue is not only about Love, but also about the nature of persuasion as it pertains to the philosophical education. The suggestion of this paper will be that *The New Atlantis*, too, raises the question of persuasion, not simply because it is an illustration of the narrative and dramatic species of poesy, but rather because it points to the very mechanism of persuasion, which forms the rhetorical core of poesy, but is also an epistemological topic of more general concern for Bacon. I also want to propose that this question may be seen to be located at the level of the text where it was quite probably meant to serve the purposes of *parabolical poesy*.

Bacon explains what he means by parabolical poesy in the relevant places in the *Advancement* and *De augmentis*, as well as, by implication, in the Preface to his collection of ancient fables *De sapientia veterum* (1609). Stories framed in the guise of parables, enigmas or fables are meant to veil philosophical, theological or political truth in language available to the lower faculties of the soul (especially to the sense and the imagination, which work with particular images rather than with universal abstract concepts). They serve a double purpose: concealment (since the mysteries of religion, polity or philosophy need to be veiled and thus protected from vulgar minds) and illustration (they are meant to throw some light on the mysteries for the sake of those who are capable of seeing through the veil). The latter purpose is also associated with a pedagogical function: communication through parables is a "method of teaching, whereby inventions that are new and abstruse and remote from vulgar opinions may find an easier passage to the understanding". Overt disclosure of meaning would be too strange for the mind to easily accept it, therefore a smoother, more persuasive route is to let the senses and the imagination digest the parabolical matter before the understanding may be successfully presented with ideas and arguments. [10] Bacon fully dedicated himself to the task of decoding a number of ancient fables and thus of laying bare their parabolical structure in *De sapientia veterum*; he also reworked three of them (Pan, Perseus and Dionysus) as an illustration of the species of parabolical poesy in *De augmentis.* It would not be too far off the mark, I believe, to suspect that he wove a similarly parabolical intent into his own fable, *The New Atlantis*, in order to carve out "an easier passage to the understanding" for his new philosophical program. [11]

That there are truly enigmatic parts in *The New Atlantis* is beyond dispute. It is hard to decide, for instance, what to make of the feast of the family, or of the attire and attitude of the Father of Solomon's House (just to mention two of the most conspicuously strange examples). One almost wishes that Bacon had provided an interpretation of the kind he offered for the ancient fables. Such frustration might even be said to be warranted on Bacon's own terms: it is, surely, some interpretative indication about the veiled mystery that is capable of ensuring the "easier passage to the understanding" rather than the veil itself. It is indeed to the former that *De sapientia veterum* is dedicated, not to the mere exposition of the latter. As things stand, all we can do is try our hands at figuring out the key to the mystery, in full awareness of, as Bacon himself rather slyly puts it, "what pliant stuff fable is made of". [12]

My proposal here will be that one of the things the parable of *The New Atlantis* is about is the question of persuasion, or else of the formation, manipulation and transmission of beliefs. I aim to show how this question is a core topic for Bacon, which is addressed not only within the domain of poesy, but also with reference to the transmission of natural philosophical knowledge, and to the epistemology of natural philosophical method. The key issue pertaining to this topic across these domains is a distinction between two main ways in which the mind may be persuaded: a sterile way, which blocks the mind's flourishing, and a fruitful way, which leads to its education and reformation. These two ways are sometimes represented, respectively, by the eloquent images of the statue and the vine. After a survey of the way in which Bacon addresses this issue in his non-poetical writings, I will try to make a case for *The New Atlantis* as a parable about the nature of persuasion.

Minds bound and free

One of the points Diotima makes in her dialogue with Socrates which the latter recounts in the *Symposium* is that there is a middle ground between knowledge and ignorance, just as there is one between the good and the bad, and between the immortal and the mortal. What lies in between knowledge and ignorance is correct judgment, that is to say, judgment that "hits the truth" without nevertheless being accompanied by "a reason". [13] The point recalls the story about the nature of beliefs in the *Meno*: judgment that fleetingly hits the truth, or true opinion, is distinct from opinion that is "tied down" (made stable) "by (giving) an account of the reason why". It is only the latter that deserves the name of knowledge, and it comes about when true opinions are "stirred" by Socratic questioning and searching, and gradually stabilized by reasoning out an explanation. True opinion, on the other hand, may itself be the fruit of (a preliminary stage of) Socratic questioning, but it may also be the result of a blind embracing of authority or tradition. The former has the potential to turn into knowledge by further inquiry, while the latter is dead to growth and remains a "shadow". [14]

The distinction between ways of holding beliefs, in particular between true opinion reached by self-assumed examination, and opinion (whether true or false) embraced by reverence to authority or tradition, is a Socratic theme that is vigorously revived in the early modern age, and may in fact be considered one of the master themes of the European modernity. Bacon takes it up, too, and it is indeed this distinction that organizes his reflections on the ways the mind comes to be persuaded. [15] In this discussion I use "persuasion" as an encompassing term, apt to describe the various ways in which the mind forms beliefs or is induced to form beliefs. In the rhetorical context in which Bacon explicitly uses it, this term is associated with the work of the imagination (recall that the eloquent images of the virtues are expected to "fill the imagination" as a route to persuading the mind). It is a similar function of the imagination, it will be seen, that comes into play in a number of Bacon's accounts of a certain type of belief-formation, one in which the mind is "bound" to an exterior source of belief, and either incapable or too lazy to take up a work of examination. The positive role of the poetic imagination is turned on its head when it comes to the acquisition of natural philosophical knowledge. In contrast, in the case of the latter, there is also a fruitful way in which the mind may be persuaded, one which should proceed by an always resumed process of self-assumed examination.

As is well known, Bacon engages in relentless quarrel with the traditional philosophies throughout his writings. The prime target of his attack is nevertheless not the content of those philosophies as such, but rather their attitudes to the acquisition and transmission of knowledge. They relied on, and promoted, Bacon says, the easy satisfaction of the mind. The Aristotelian philosophy, for instance, remained content to work with common notions without submitting them to careful trial and examination. That is not only a flawed source of natural knowledge, Bacon believes, but is also pernicious for the progress of the mind: it not only leaves the understanding where it was in the first place, but binds it and encourages it to indulge in its own pleasures. The process is described with reference to the workings of the imagination: "Nothing pleases the many unless it strikes (*feriat*) the imagination, or binds (*astringat)* the understanding with the bands (*nodis*) of common notions". At the same time, this picture of the *acquisition* of knowledge is accompanied by a similar picture of the *transmission* of knowledge in the history of philosophy: the Platonic and the Aristotelian philosophies in particular came down to the Renaissance in the form of systems which are more apt to win people's reverence than stimulate their understanding powers: it is precisely their systematic nature that encourages a distorted type of consent, which comes "from prejudgment and upon the authority of others", in contrast with "true consent" (*verus consensus*), which "consists in the coincidence of true judgments, after due examination (*ex libertate judicii (re prius explorata*))". [16] The basic contrast that Bacon establishes here is between bound minds and free minds. Whether we talk of the acquisition of beliefs in inquiry, or of the historical transmission of knowledge, there are two main routes towards the building of the mind's consent: either in a blind, servile way or by free, examination-based judgment.

The opinions of a bound mind come in many shapes in Bacon's writings, and they usually involve references to the work of the imagination. The worst case, when seen from the point of view of the bound-free dichotomy, is that of the subjection of other minds by manipulation. The varieties of this situation are expounded in the *Sylva Sylvarum*, century X, in the context of a discussion of the powers of the imagination. There are strange reported cases of men who, by the power of concentration alone (which possibly involves the direction of "spirits" form mind to mind), are able to "bind" other minds into thinking thoughts which the manipulator wants them to think. [17] But there are other, less extraordinary cases, in which minds are bound by means of the authority and reputation of men and practices. Authority, Bacon writes, is much more potent than reason or experience in "fortifying" belief. This sort of binding of minds also works through the imagination, which may itself by "fortified" by means of various, more or less magical, props and rituals. [18] In the *Sylva*, Bacon recounts such cases with the aim of sketching a natural history of the communication of spirits in the corporeal world; he consequently recommends types of relevant experiments, gives directions towards assessing the credibility of reports, and formulates queries and hypotheses. He is thus generally neutral as to the moral aspect of such cases, but in the very last entry of the book, there is an evaluative suggestion: the impulse towards the "submission and subjection of other men's minds, wills or affections" is indicative of "depraved" tempers, which delight in tyranny. [19] At stake here is the tyranny of doctrines, be they philosophical or religious, which are indeed able to bind understandings into complete subjection.

When seen from the perspective of the bound minds themselves, this phenomenon accounts for the rise of credulity and blind faith. If the desire to subject other minds is attributable to a depraved temper, the propensity to let one's own mind become subjected is one of the major causes of the distorted notions Bacon calls "the idols of the mind." Men easily become partisans, he writes, since their minds are given to extreme admiration, love or appetite for either antiquity or novelty. Such partisanship disturbs the healthy functioning of judgment and it hurries the mind's consent (*ad consensum abripiatur*). [20] Moreover, men are apt to become partisans, as it were, of doctrines they themselves created: once such "sciences and speculations" are embraced, everything else will appear to their authors "colored" by those inventions. Thus, for instance, once Gilbert came up with the theory of the magnet, he started seeing magnets everywhere. [21] These are all instances of minds becoming bound to doctrines which they accept on account of admiration or appetite. In other words, they are persuaded by the pressure of external authority (even my own doctrine may become exterior to me and start exercising an authoritarian pressure on my further thoughts), rather than as an outcome of the mind's own work of examination. This is also the case with what Bacon calls the "errors of tradition" – a theme which remains constant from his early to his late writings. Tradition in the sense of transmission of knowledge can (and usually does) take the form of mind-blocking (or -binding) pedagogy, which proceeds by the inoculation of rounded-up doctrines and bodies of knowledge, without making explicit the route to their discovery and the principles on which they are raised, and without encouraging examination and search in either receiver or deliverer. [22]

If the tradition of knowledge is thus prone to working this sort of binding persuasion in the minds of men, so is the formation of opinions in inquiry, which is equally disturbed by various native inclinations of the mind. Several of the idols are cases in point. Due to the narrowness of the human spirit (*angustiis spiritus humani*), the understanding "is moved (*movetur*) by those things which strike and enter it simultaneously and suddenly, and so fill the imagination (*a quibus phantasia impleri et inflari consueuit*)". As a consequence, the understanding "feigns and supposes all other things to be somehow similar to those things by which it is surrounded". True discovery in natural inquiry should be based on the collection and analysis of instances which are heterogeneous to those already observed, but the intellect is usually "slow (*tardus*) and unfit (*inhabilis*)" for the task. [23] On the other hand, there is also a certain proneness of the human spirit to preoccupation (*praeoccupatione spiritus humani*). Once it has adopted an opinion, the human mind "draws all things else to support and agree with it," despite contrary or negative instances, "which is a great and pernicious determination (*magno et pernicioso praeiudicio*)". The intellect is more "moved and excited (*moveatur et excitetur*) by affirmatives than by negatives." Thus, in natural investigations, "the first conclusion colors and brings into conformity with itself all that come after". [24] Both "narrowness" and "preoccupation" are instances of a blocking of inquiry due to the mind's surrender to familiar opinions, which have the power to turn themselves into patterns of thought which come to predetermine any other conclusions, and even any other questions, it might form. The mental operation involved in these cases is described in terms of a moving, or striking, or filling of either the imagination or the intellect itself – an operation of the same order as that involved in rhetorical persuasion. The same phenomenon is described under the name "anticipation." Anticipations are the first conclusions of the mind, without enough examination of particulars, to be contrasted with "interpretations." The anticipations, Bacon writes, are far more powerful than the interpretations "for the winning of assent," since they "straightaway touch (*perstringunt*) [or strike (*percutere*)] the understanding and fill the imagination (*phantasiam implent*)". [25] This is indeed what happens when the mind is presented with common notions, whose "bands", Bacon said, "bind" the understanding, so that it becomes blind to negative or heterogeneous instances, refuses further inquiry into particulars, and rests in pre-conceived notions and doctrines which "infect" the mind. In *Valerius Terminus* (1603), the arrest of experimental inquiry is due to a state of the mind described as "satisfaction": "it is much easier to find out such causes as will satisfy the mind of man and quiet objections than such causes as will direct him and give him light to new experiences and inventions". [26]

In the cases presented above, the mind is unable to take up the severe work of examination which may lead to true knowledge as well as to its own flourishing. It may be completely incapacitated by (magical) manipulation, or simply seduced by the force of authority. It gives in to its own credulity and love of certain doctrines, or is crippled by pernicious pedagogy. And it is usually too slow, lazy or dedicated to its own satisfaction to commit to the continued effort of extricating itself from the "bands" of familiar notions and beliefs. In all these cases, persuasion works by binding the mind. Bacon's prescriptions of guidelines for the conduct of natural inquiry as well as for the transmission of knowledge are so many directions towards the freeing of the mind from such bands, precisely by means of commitment to and perseverance in the work of examination and search. Thus, for instance, the slowness, narrowness and preoccupation of the mind can be remedied by the practice of observing and interpreting such facts that contradict our preconceived (or common) notions, i.e. what he calls negative or heterogeneous instances. Equally, blind credulity may be remedied by dynamic methods for the transmission of knowledge, such as the preference for aphorisms and "initiative" methods over the magisterial way of teaching. [27] Natural philosophical directions for the interpretation of nature and initiative methods of teaching should be able to order and purify the mind's disturbed tendencies and thus to make it capable of patient, severe and continued examination. The beliefs it would thus form would be the fruit of a type of persuasion that comes with free judgment.

The bound minds versus free minds dichotomy is also a dichotomy between sterility and growth. The pervasiveness of the theme of (organic) growth in Bacon's writings is perhaps underappreciated. The tendency is rather to see him as an early father of modern experimental science, whose principle is rather the accumulation of bodies of knowledge as well as of material benefits – a quantitative growth. [28] In fact, the notion of a vital, fruitful principle is at the core of his view of knowledge. For instance, he uses the metaphor of the tree of knowledge in a substantive way, and imagines the relations among the sciences precisely in terms of them being nourished by a common trunk and in turn nourishing each other. [29] Similarly, he writes of a "vital principle" which his new method is apt to instill in the transmission of knowledge through the succession of generations. In contrast with the systematic, magisterial, mind-binding philosophies of the past, which stand like "statues of the gods" and "are thronged with worshippers, but never move", his philosophical program is such that it does not sell a doctrine, but shows a fruitful way of inquiry. It will thus make it possible for the "tradition of the sciences" to "mature and spread like some lively vigorous vine". [30] Along the same lines, the difference between the magisterial and the initiative methods of teaching involves a similar generational metaphor: "The one transmits knowledge to the crowd of learners; the other to the sons, as it were, of science. The end of the one is the use of knowledges, as they now are; of the other the continuation and further progression of them". [31]

In sum, I suggest that for Bacon the question of persuasion is played out in between the poles of the statue and the vine, or of the sterile and the fruitful ways of forming and transmitting beliefs. It remains to ask whether *The New Atlantis* is not only a work *of* persuasion (as any piece of poesy would), but also one *about* persuasion, and thus a parable meant to communicate Bacon's reflections on a topic which was central to his philosophical program.

Of statues and vines

There is, surely, a double thrust to persuasion: there is persuasion-to and persuasion-that, persuasion towards action and persuasion towards belief. The two are nevertheless linked, and especially so in an intellectual context (like Bacon's) for which action and thought are sides of the same coin. In the moral-rhetorical context, the function of poesy is ultimately persuasion towards virtuous action, but the route to this end goes through a persuasion of the mind. The latter takes the form of a "filling" of the imagination with images of the virtues made present and vivid by the force of eloquence, which in turn is apt to give reason the upper hand against rebellious affections, and finally induce to virtuous action. The moral life cannot rest on doctrine alone, and beliefs about the good that remain beliefs-that are sterile. Bacon makes the point by employing the statue metaphor we have already encountered: without the practical part of moral philosophy (the "culture of the mind") which is apt to prepare the mind for moral action, the theoretical doctrine of the good "remains, like a statue, beautiful to contemplate, but without life and motion". [32] It is also the case, though, that moral action cannot come about without a persuasion of the mind itself. As Sidney put it, virtuous behavior rests on virtuous minds, which have come to incorporate "lively knowledge".

But is this relevant to the natural philosophical context? It might be said that natural philosophy is geared towards truth, not action. Nevertheless, we have seen that there is a middle term between belief and action in the moral-rhetorical context, which is also pertinent to the natural philosophical search for truth: again in Sidney's words, the "purifying of wit", or in Bacon's, the ordering and government of the mind's activities. What they describe thus is a process, indeed an action, which is located at the level of the mind, and on which externalized moral action depends. And it is in fact at this level that the generation of lively or sterile knowledge takes place. The mind is the stage where both poetic and philosophical persuasion comes into play. In the case of philosophical persuasion, it may generate dynamic inquiry or it may solidify the mind into stasis. It may breed vines or carve out statues.

The New Atlantis may be seen, at one level, as a "speaking picture" crafted in a rhetorically able way in order to "fill the imagination" with persuading images of the good. As an illustration of narrative and dramatic poesy, it weaves pictures of exemplary humanity, piety, prudence, tolerance and chastity. Various characters, events, or relations give narrative and dramatic flesh to these virtues: the humane and pious deportment of the Governor of the House of Strangers, his stories about the political wisdom of Bensalem's historical rulers, the moral wisdom, tolerance and chastity of the inhabitants of the island illustrated by the feast of the family and reinforced by Joabin's relation, or the wise organization of the natural philosophical society of Solomon's House as expounded by one of its Fathers – all these are vivid pictures which, in conformity with Renaissance and Baconian rhetorical theory, should be able to win over the imagination to the side of reason and enable the pursuit of the true good in those exposed to them. The readers witness directly (as readers), as well as vicariously (thanks to the sailors in the story through whose eyes the whole is seen), an eloquent picture of various types of perfection; the outcome should be that their imaginations are filled and their minds persuaded so that they are induced to seeking the same sort of perfection in their own lives.

At another level, though, *The New Atlantis* seems to perform a parabolical veiling of the theme of the transmission of knowledge (which I have included in the general question of persuasion), by means of allusions and images that have to do with the topic of generation. This topic traverses, in various guises, all the major episodes of the story. The opening of the text is under the sign of rebirth and regeneration in a Christian key: the sailors saved from the shipwreck feel they witness a new creation, and the miraculous transmission of the Scriptures to the island in the Apostolic times duly conduces to a regeneration of its people. [33] The Christian opening is followed by the modulation of the same theme in terms of secular policy. Fruitful generation and succession is one of the key principles of both Bensalem's state policy and of the policy of Solomon's House. The wise king Salomana instated his laws secrecy in order to "give perpetuity to that which in his time was so happily established". That this was a truly fertile policy is indicated by the contrast with the Kingdom of China, which similarly opted for secrecy, but in a bad, sterile way, since "there it is a poor thing, and hath made them a curious, ignorant, fearful, foolish nation". [34] The same king established the institution of Solomon's House, "dedicated to the study of the works and creatures of God", and committed to a special sort of trade, "not for gold, silver, or jewels … but only for God's first creature, which was light". [35] The political theme thus makes room for the institutional theme, which is subsequently developed by the Father of Solomon's House, who describes the various "employments and offices" of this trade of light, and who also explicitly introduces the theme of the transmission of knowledge through generations: "we have also, as you must think, novices and apprentices, that the succession of the former employed men do not fail". This is indeed the note on which the story ends, when the sailor who had been the sole auditor of the Father's story is granted the right "to publish it, for the good of other nations". [36]

In between the Christian-political variants of the theme of generation and its reprisal in terms of the organization and transmission of knowledge stands (at the very core of the story) the mysterious feast of the family. It is here, I suggest, that the generation theme is given its most emblematic, parabolical expression. On the face of it, the episode is about a specific custom of the island, the celebration of large families, of their first progenitor (the father of the family, or the "tirsan"), and of the son who will be chosen by the tirsan to live in the house with him. The custom is praised by the sailors-witnesses as "the most natural, pious and reverend custom" which accords the greatest "reverence and obedience … to the order of nature". [37] The ceremony (and the text) embodies the theme of natural growth by giving pride of place to the idea of generation, succession, propagation. Its master image is that of the vine. The tirsan sits on a chair over which is a "state" made of ever-green ivy, embroidered with silver and silk, the leaves and twigs of which will be shared out to the friends of the family when the ceremony is over. Another central object in the ceremony is a cluster of grapes of gold, with the number of grapes matching that of the descendants of the family, which the tirsan will pass on to his chosen son, whereby the latter becomes Son of the Vine. [38]

The vine, we have seen, is Bacon's chosen image for representing the fruitful "tradition of the sciences". The prominence of the same image (with similar connotations of natural growth and generation) in the episode of the feast of the family warrants the possibility that it is indeed the growth of knowledge through generations that constitutes the parabolical meaning of this part of the story. It would also be in keeping with parabolical logic that such a highly symbolic emblem should occupy the central place, as a sort of pinnacle of the more or less explicit allusions to the same theme preceding and following it. Equally, it would be in keeping with the late Renaissance delight in poetic self-referentiality that a parable about the fruitful transmission of knowledge should be invested, on account of its very form, with the aim of ensuring the efficient transmission of vital knowledge (here knowledge about the way knowledge should be transmitted).

There is another element in the story that supports the transmission of knowledge theme. The Father of Solomon's House, we have seen, gives the sailor leave to pass on the story about that institution to other countries. This episode is again highly dramatic, and constructed as a ceremony or ritual. The Father seems to have priest-like functions (he holds his hand as if blessing the audience). His attire, posture and gestures are minutely described, as is the procession with its whole paraphernalia. He is "comely of person" and has "an aspect as if he pitied men", [39] and he addresses the sailor who is admitted to the private conference as "My son…" The Father of Solomon's House is in fact a perfect replica of the "man of peaceful and serene air" whose "face had become habituated to the expression of pity", who is the deliverer of the address to a gathering he calls "my sons" in Bacon's earlier *Redargutio philosophiarum* (1608). [40] The purpose of that address is a "preliminary preparation of the mind", which consists in the main topics of Bacon's program for the reformation of philosophy, and of which no small part is the reformation of its practitioners. At the basis of this double reformation is, Bacon writes here, as everywhere, a reformation of the ways knowledge is acquired and transmitted.

It seems thus that in the fabric *The New Atlantis* is woven a parabolical encoding of the theme of the fruitful transmission of knowledge, by means of images of growth and generation and of the emblem of the vine. But there also seems to be an equally parabolical stream in the story which points to the possibility (and danger) of statue-like stasis. This stream is illustrated at the level of the relationship among the various groups of characters in the story. On the one hand, there is the otherwise curious immobility of the Bensalemites whenever they are co-actors in the same situations with the Fathers of Solomon's House. When faced with the miraculous pillar of light rising from the sea in the Apostolic times, the Bensalemites "found themselves all bound" and their "boats stood all as in a theatre", whereas it was only the wise men of Solomon's House who were able to proceed towards the pillar of light. [41] At the moment of the stately visit of the Father of Solomon's House, who blesses Bensalem's people in silence, the latter stand in the road in perfect order, and those at the windows stand "as if they had been placed". [42] Surely, within the narrative logic of the story, these situations are explained in terms of the Fathers' ascendancy over the Bensalemites in terms of both natural philosophical wisdom and of religious-like office. But if we look at them from the point of view of parabolical logic, such immobility may well be associated with the emblem of the statue, standing for the sterile transmission of knowledge.

On the other hand, there is also the absence of any kind of indication about the kind of relationship that is established between the sailor-narrator and the Father of Solomon's House. At every stage in the story there are more or less developed hints about the sailors' reactions to what they see or hear. Once admitted to the House of Strangers, they are impressed by the humanity and piety of their hosts and decide to "reform [their] ways". [43] The Governor's story about the wise rule of King Salomana leaves them "astonished" and pregnant with yet unformulated questions. [44] They seem to sincerely admire the custom of the feast of the family, in which "nature did so much preside", and are brought to a contemplation of their own sins when hearing of the chastity of the islanders from Joabin the Jew. [45] In all these situations, they are active receivers, seemingly incorporating the lessons of the island. But there is absolutely no suggestion about any kind of reaction when they are presented to the Father of Solomon's House, or when the sailor-narrator is admitted to the private conference where the great secrets of the House are expounded. It is thus at the very moment when the question of the transmission of knowledge to the outside world is raised in the most explicit manner that any kind of response is absent. In conformity with the parabolical logic I have followed, the absence is eloquent in itself, since it leaves open both possibilities, of the fruitful propagation and of the death of stasis. The other characters' immobility before the Fathers of Solomon's House is thus possibly a reminder of the dangers of authority and blind faith, and of the consequent blockage of the propagation of the sciences in statuesque rigidity. The Fathers of Solomon's House themselves, rather worryingly, choose to erect statues "of all principal inventors". [46]

Conclusion

If there is any plausibility to this interpretation, *The New Atlantis* performs several functions, in conformity with the species of poesy it illustrates. It is a speaking picture of various perfections, meant to fill the imagination and persuade towards virtuous action. It is also a parable about the very nature of persuasion as it pertains to philosophical education and to the transmission of knowledge. As such, it raises questions relative to the filling of the imagination which results in sterile credulity, while at the same time encoding the theme of the fruitful propagation of knowledge. It thus explores with poetic means a theme that was central to Bacon's philosophical program.

The choice to explore with poetic means a natural philosophical theme – and thus to merge what we might call his literary and his scientific concerns – is warranted by the nature of the question raised. I have argued that the question of persuasion occupies a place at the crossroads of the poetic and the natural philosophical fields. Although in general terms Bacon kept these fields separate, the terms in which he conceived of the way the mind is induced to form beliefs are similar in both. A similar filling of the imagination conduces to consent whether in the domain of rhetoric, of the formation of beliefs in inquiry, or of the tradition of knowledge. While the rhetorical-moral context assigns this mental process the prime role in the education of virtue (in conformity with the received theory of Renaissance poetics), the natural philosophical context in which Bacon explores the same question is apt to complicate the problem. Rhetorical persuasion by means of winning minds (or imaginations) over is indeed a valuable part of a philosophical education. "Initiative" pedagogical methods, aphorisms and parables are among Bacon's recommended tools therein. The student of philosophy (or of natural philosophy) cannot become a student proper unless he is turned into an Alcibiades. With help along the way and a commitment to take up the work of search and examination on his own, he might become a Meno and, in time, a Socrates. But there is also, in this context, a filling of the imagination and thus a type of persuasion that has the completely opposite effect, when ideas, notions or doctrines are embraced with blind faith. One always runs the risk, Bacon seems to suggest, of becoming a hollow-sounding Agathon.

References

1. Bacon, F., *The Advancement of Learning* II, *The Works of Francis Bacon,* ed. by Spedding, J., Ellis, R.J., Heath, D.D., Friedrich Frommann Verlag—Günther Holzboog, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, 14 vols., 1963-1994 [1857-1874] (hereafter WFB) III, p. 329.
2. Bacon, F., *De augmentis scientiarum* II, WFB IV, p. 293. On Bacon's division of knowledge according to the three main faculties of the understanding, with a thesis about their attribution to the sensitive soul, see Tonelli, O.G., 'Galen and Francis Bacon: Faculties of the Soul and the Classification of Knowledge', in Kelley, D.R., and Popkin, R.H., eds., *The Shapes of Knowledge from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment*, Kluwer Academic Publishers, Dordrecht, Boston, London, 1991, pp. 61-81. For the medieval and Renaissance developments in the theories of the sensitive and the intellective souls, see Park, K., 'The Organic Soul' and Kessler, E., 'The Intellective Soul', both in Skinner, Q., Kessler, E., Kraye, J., eds., *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2007 (1998), pp. 464-84 and 485-534.
3. Bacon, F., *The Advancement of Learning* II, WFB III, p. 344; *De augmentis scientiarum* II, WFB IV, p. 315, cf. the Latin version, WFB I, p. 518.
4. Bacon, F., *The New Atlantis*, WFB III, p. 147.
5. Bacon, F., *De augmentis scientiarum* VI, WFB IV, pp. 455-7, cf. the Latin version, WFB I, 671-3.
6. Sidney, P., 'A defence of poetry', in Vickers, B., ed., *English Renaissance Literary Criticism*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2003 (1999), pp. 336-91, at pp. 347, 351-2. On the moral role of Renaissance rhetoric, see also Vickers' introduction to that volume, as well as, in the context of sacred rhetoric, Shuger, D., *Sacred Rhetoric: The Christian Grand Style in the English Renaissance*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1988, and Morgan, J., *Godly Learning: Puritan Attitudes towards Reason, Learning, and Education, 1560-1640*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1986. For Sidney's poetics in particular, placed in the intellectual and theological context of his time, see Stillman, R.,E., *Philip Sidney and the Poetics of Renaissance Cosmopolitanism*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2008.
7. On the art of memory and the role of the *imagines agentes* therein, see Yates, F.A., *The Art of Memory*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1978 (1966), pp. 26, 253, 290; Culianu, I.P., *Eros si magie in Renastere, 1484* [*Eros et magie a la Renaissance, 1484*, Paris, 1984], Nemira, Bucureşti 1994, p. 401; Bolzoni, L., *The Gallery of Memory*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, Buffalo, London, 2001, pp. 143-8. Bacon refers to the art of memory in similar terms in *Sylva Sylvarum* X, WFB II, p. 659. On the active role of memory in Bacon's philosophy, see Lewis, R., 'A Kind of Sagacity: Francis Bacon, the Ars Memoriae and the Pursuit of Natural Knowledge', *Intellectual History Review* 19.2 (2009), pp. 155-75.
8. Bacon, F., *De augmentis scientiarum* II, WFB IV, p. 316.
9. Plato, *Symposium* 212b, 215c-d, 216b,e, trans. Nehamas, A., and Woodruff, P., in *Complete Works*, ed. by Cooper, J., M., Hackett Publishing Company, Indianapolis/Cambridge, 1997, pp. 457-505, at pp. 494-9.
10. Bacon, F., *De sapientia veterum*, WFB VI, p. 698. Cf. *The Advancement of Learning* II, WFB III, p. 344, *De augmentis scientiarum* II, WFB IV, p. 317.
11. Similar language is employed in the *Novum Organum*, where Bacon writes that he wishes to have his doctrine "enter quietly into the minds that are fit and capable of receiving it", and that "everything has to be done with gentleness" (I.xxxv and I.xcii, WFB IV, pp. 53, 91).
12. Bacon, F., *De sapientia veterum*, WFB VI, p. 695. For a review of the mysteries of *The New Atlantis* and of the various extant interpretations, with suggestions towards a reading of the fable in terms of rites of initiation into a Baconian "brotherhood of learning", see Jalobeanu D.'s Introductory study to Bacon, F., *Noua Altantida*, trans. Jalobeanu, D., Nemira, Bucuresti, 2007, pp. 5-80.

13. Plato, *Symposium* 202a, trans. Nehamas, A., and Woodruff, P., in *Complete Works*, ed. by Cooper, J.M., Hackett Publishing Company, Indianapolis/Cambridge, 1997, pp. 457-505, at p. 485.
14. Plato, *Meno* 86a, 98a, 100a, trans. Grube, G.,M.,A., in *Complete Works*, ed. by Cooper, J.,M., Hackett Publishing Company, Indianapolis/Cambridge, 1997, pp. 870-97, at pp. 886, 895, 897. For this reading, I rely entirely on Scott, D., *Recollection and Experience: Plato's Theory of Learning and its Successors*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1995, chapter 1 ("The *Meno*").
15. For a stimulating approach to the Socratic theme in Bacon and his contemporaries, see McCaskey, J.P., *Regula Socratis: The Rediscovery of Ancient Induction in Early Modern England*, PhD Dissertation, Stanford University, 2006. I discuss the question of the formation of belief in early modern English epistemological accounts in the context of the idea of an education of the inquirer's mind in Corneanu, S., *Regimens of the Mind: Boyle, Locke, and the Early Modern* Cultura Animi *Tradition*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, forthcoming 2011.
16. Bacon, F., *Novum Organum* I.lxxvii, WFB IV, pp. 76-7, cf. The Latin version, WFB I, pp.185-6.
17. Bacon, F., *Sylva Sylvarum* X, WFB II, pp. 654-5.
18. Bacon, F., *Sylva Sylvarum* X, WFB II, pp. 656-7.
19. Bacon, F., *Sylva Sylvarum* X, WFB II, p. 672.
20. Bacon, F., *Novum Organum* I.lvi, WFB IV, pp. 59-60, cf. The Latin version, WFB I, p. 170.
21. Bacon, F., *Novum Organum* I.liv, WFB IV, p. 59, cf. The Latin version, WFB I, p. 169.
22. Bacon, F., *Valerius Terminus*, WFB III, p. 226. Cf. *The Advancement of Learning* I, WFB III, p. 292; *Novum Organum* I.lxxxvi, WFB IV, p. 85.
23. Bacon, F., *Novum Organum* I.xlvii, WFB IV, pp. 56-7, cf. The Latin version, WFB I, p. 166.
24. Bacon, F., *Novum Organum* I.xlvi, WFB IV, p. 56, cf. The Latin version, WFB I, p. 166.
25. Bacon, F., *Novum Organum* I.xxviii, WFB IV, pp. 51-2, cf. The Latin version, WFB I, p. 161.
26. Bacon, F., *Valerius Terminus*, WFB III, p. 232. Cf. Also *Novum Organum* I.lxxxi, WFB IV, pp. 79-80, cf. The Latin version, WFB I, p. 188.
27. I develop these points in Corneanu, S., *Regimens of the Mind: Boyle, Locke, and the Early Modern* Cultura Animi *Tradition*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, forthcoming 2011, chapter 1 ("Francis Bacon and the Art of Direction").
28. E.g. Harrison, P., 'The Natural Philosopher and the Virtues', in Condren, C.; Gaukroger, S. and Hunter, I., eds., *The Philosopher in Early Modern Europe: The Nature of a Contested Identity,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2006, pp. 202-28.
29. Bacon, F., *The Advancement of Learning* II, WFB III, p. 346; *Novum Organum* I.lxxx, WFB IV, p. 79.
30. Bacon, F., *Temporis partus masculus* and *Redargutio philosophiarum*, in Farrington, B., *The Philosophy of Francis Bacon: An Essay on Its Development from 1603 to 1609 with New Translations of Fundamental Texts*, Liverpool University Press, Liverpool, 1964, pp. 62, 126-7. Cf. *Instauratio magna*, WFB IV, p. 14, *Novum Organum* I.lxxiv, WFB IV, pp. 74-5.
31. Bacon, F., *De augmentis scientiarum* VI, WFB IV, p. 449.
32. Bacon, F., *The Advancement of Learning* II, WFB III, p. 432.
33. Bacon, F., *The New Atlantis*, WFB III, pp. 129, 134, 139.
34. Bacon, F., *The New Atlantis*, WFB III, p, 144.
35. Bacon, F., *The New Atlantis*, WFB III, pp. 146-7.
36. Bacon, F., *The New Atlantis*, WFB III, pp. 164-6.
37. Bacon, F., *The New Atlantis*, WFB III, pp. 147-8.
38. Bacon, F., *The New Atlantis*, WFB III, pp. 148-50.
39. Bacon, F., *The New Atlantis*, WFB III, p. 154.
40. Bacon, F., *Redargutio philosophiarum*, in Farrington, B., *The Philosophy of Francis Bacon: An Essay on Its Development from 1603 to 1609 with New Translations of Fundamental Texts*, Liverpool University Press, Liverpool, 1964, p. 104.
41. Bacon, F., *The New Atlantis*, WFB III, pp. 137-8.
42. Bacon, F., *The New Atlantis*, WFB III, p. 155.

43. Bacon, F., *The New Atlantis*, WFB III, p. 134.
44. Bacon, F., *The New Atlantis*, WFB III, p. 147.
45. Bacon, F., *The New Atlantis*, WFB III, pp. 151, 153.
46. Bacon, F., *The New Atlantis*, WFB III, pp. 165-6.

Bibliography

1. Bacon, F., *The Advancement of Learning* II, *The Works of Francis Bacon,* ed. by Spedding, J., Ellis, R.J., Heath, D.D., Friedrich Frommann Verlag—Günther Holzboog, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, 14 vols., 1963-1994 [1857-1874].
2. Bacon, F., *Noua Altantida*, trans. and introductory study Jalobeanu, D., Nemira, Bucuresti, 2007.
3. Bolzoni, L., *The Gallery of Memory*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, Buffalo, London, 2001.
4. Corneanu, S., *Regimens of the Mind: Boyle, Locke, and the Early Modern* Cultura Animi *Tradition*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, forthcoming 2011.
5. Culianu, I. P., *Eros si magie in Renastere, 1484* [*Eros et magie a la Renaissance, 1484*, Flammarion, Paris, 1984], Nemira, Bucuresti, 1994.
6. Farrington, B., *The Philosophy of Francis Bacon: An Essay on Its Development from 1603 to 1609 with New Translations of Fundamental Texts*, Liverpool University Press, Liverpool, 1964.
7. Harrison, P., 'The Natural Philosopher and the Virtues', in Condren, C., Gaukroger, S. and Hunter, I., eds., *The Philosopher in Early Modern Europe: The Nature of a Contested Identity,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2006.
8. Kessler, E., 'The Intellective Soul', in Skinner, Q., Kessler, E., Kraye, J., eds., *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2007 (1998), pp. 485-534.
9. Lewis, R., 'A Kind of Sagacity: Francis Bacon, the Ars Memoriae and the Pursuit of Natural Knowledge', *Intellectual History Review* 19.2 (2009), pp. 155-75.
10. McCaskey, J.P., *Regula Socratis: The Rediscovery of Ancient Induction in Early Modern England*, PhD Dissertation, Stanford University, 2006.
11. Morgan, J., *Godly Learning: Puritan Attitudes towards Reason, Learning, and Education, 1560-1640*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1986.
12. Park, K., 'The Organic Soul', in Skinner, Q., Kessler, E., Kraye, J., eds., *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2007 (1998), pp. 464-84.
13. Plato, *Complete Works*, ed. by Cooper, J.M., Hackett Publishing Company, Indianapolis/Cambridge, 1997.
14. Scott, D., *Recollection and Experience: Plato's Theory of Learning and its Successors*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1995.
15. Shuger, D., *Sacred Rhetoric: The Christian Grand Style in the English Renaissance*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1988.
16. Sidney, Sir P., 'A Defence of Poetry', in Vickers, B., ed., *English Renaissance Literary Criticism*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2003 (1999), pp. 336-91.
17. Stillman, R.E., *Philip Sidney and the Poetics of Renaissance Cosmopolitanism*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2008.
18. Tonelli, O. G., 'Galen and Francis Bacon: Faculties of the Soul and the Classification of Knowledge', in Kelley, D. R., and Popkin, R.H., eds., *The Shapes of Knowledge from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment*, Kluwer Academic Publishers, Dordrecht, Boston, London, 1991, pp. 61-81.
19. Yates, F. A., *The Art of Memory*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1978 (1966).