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Francis Bacon and Rene Descartes blazoned the advent of a scientific civilization. Both men ridiculed earlier methods of seeking knowledge, that were once used in the academic traditions of the universities founded in the Middle Ages. Both men published between 1620 and 1640 and held to the belief that Medieval or Aristotelian methods were retrograding and worthless. Through their works they stressed that truth was something we find at the end, after a long process of investigation, experiment, or intermediate thought. Although their programs differed they both became pioneers in the field of scientific knowledge.

Francis Bacon called for a complete new start in science and civilization. Through his *Instauratio Magna* or “Great Renewal” he achieved his goal. He only completed two parts of his *Instauratio Magna*. In 1620, the *Novum Organum* or new method of acquiring knowledge was published. Bacon insisted on using a correct scientific method building on inductive reasoning. In the inductive method we proceed from the particular to the general, from the concrete to the abstract. Carefully organized systematic experiments with thorough observations would bring about correct generalizations. Bacon advised his readers to put aside all the traditional ideas and look at the world with fresh eyes. By doing so, his philosophy professed a useful way of avoiding seeing the world in a preconceived manner. Our thoughts would be guided by the facts as we actually observed them.

In *The Advancement of Learning*, published in 1623 Bacon insisted that true knowledge was useful knowledge. In *The Atlantis* (1627) he portrayed a scientific utopia whose inhabitants enjoyed a perfect society through their knowledge and command of nature. The fact that knowledge could be used

for practical purposes became a sign or proof that it was true knowledge. Baconians believed knowledge was power. Scientific knowledge though, could be used for good or for evil. Bacon's greatest weakness was his lack of an understanding of the role of mathematics. It was later discovered that truly scientific reasoning depended on the degree to which it could be mathematical. The scientific method itself used both deductive and inductive reasoning.

Rene Descartes was a superb mathematician and was considered the inventor of coordinate geometry. He showed that any algebraic formula could be plotted as a curve in space while any curve in space could also be converted into algebraic terms. Descartes set forth his ideas in his Discourse on Method in 1637. He reflected the doubt and confusion that was pervasive in the seventeenth century yet advanced a philosophy that dominated thought for centuries to come. He advanced the principle of systematic doubt. He arrived at a philosophy of dualism, the famous "Cartesian dualism," which held that god had created two kinds of fundamental reality in the universe. One was "thinking substance" (mind, spirit, consciousness, subjective experience). The other was "extended substance" which was everything outside the mind and hence objective.

One fact that seemed beyond doubt was his own existence; "I think therefore I exist". He accepted only those things that his own reasoning told him was true. He used the mind as a path to knowledge and through mathematics; he believed he could understand the material world because it was pure mechanism. Matter was something inert and independent of the observer and could be investigated by a detached rationality. Descartes
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expressed the Baconian idea of discovering a philosophy by which understands the forces and action of fire, water, air the stars, and heavens and all other bodies that surround us, we can use these forces to make ourselves masters of nature.

Bacon and Descartes were philosophers that strongly reflected the new conception of the universe in the seventeenth century. They both shared the doubts and perplexities of their time while having disdain for the beliefs of the generations before them. Descartes was known too herald rationalism with a system of thought based on the idea that reason was the chief source of knowledge. Bacon believed that science was to give people new discoveries and power in order to serve humans by conquering nature in action. Though their programs were quite different, they both offered scientific views that opened the way to a better education and for a better life.