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## **A Comparative Study of Francis Bacon and Bertrand Russell's Prose Style**

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### **Abstract**

In this article, the analytical study of Francis Bacon's and Bertrand Russell's Prose style is presented. Both scholars and writers have more than Three hundred years gap in each other. But both scholars have similarities in their writings. Anyhow, leading qualities of both writers' prose style are also presented in the end of this article.

### **Introduction**

#### **Prose**

Prose and poetry are the basic form of literature. Literature came in to being in the form of verse in the beginning of human history. Verse writings are most technical writing. Later on in English literature prose came in to being. And prose oratorical prose

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such as Historical prose, Fictional prose, Oratorical prose etc. In the development of English, there are many periods and every period has its own style. Francis Bacon is the writer of Renaissance and Bertrand Russell is the writer of Modern Age. Both are philosopher and well known essayist. Their contributions towards the English prose are countless. Their prose style played a great role in the development of English prose.

Prose is the ordinary form of written or spoken language. It is usually for the description of facts or the discussion of whatever one's thoughts which is non poetic and non theatrical. There is however, a blend of the two forms of literature known as prose poetry (Le Bourgeois 2003)

### **Basic Prose Style**

The prose style describes twelve basic principles of good prose style and illustrates most of these principles with examples. Since most writers and editors agree about importance of these twelve basic principles (William Joseph M. 2000)

These twelve are as under:

1. Write in the active voice.
2. Avoid nominalization.
3. Express parallel ideas in parallel grammatical form.
4. Place the emphatic words at the end of the sentence.
5. Express statements in positive form.
6. Vary sentence patterns.
7. Choosing the words carefully.
8. Avoid over using word modifiers.
9. Clarify the logical relationship among the ideas such as
  - (i) Addition. (ii) Comparison (iii) contrast (iv) Place.
  - (v) Purpose (vi) Result, (vii) Summary, Intensification.
  - (viii) Time. (later, after words, In the meantime, soon)
10. Prune dead words.
11. Avoid redundancy
12. Use metaphor for illustration.

### **Francis Bacon**

Francis Bacon (1561-1626) was an English philosopher, statesman, scientist, lawyer, jurist and author. He is known as the Father of empiricism and famously died of pneumonia contracted while studying the effects of freezing on the preservation of meat. He served both as Attorney General and Lord Chancellor of England. Although his political career ended in disgrace, he remained extremely influential; his works, especially as philosophical advocate and practitioner of scientific revolution. Bacon was knighted in

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1603, created Baron Verulam in 1618 and Viscount St. Alban in 1621. As he died without heirs both peerages became extinct upon his death (Cousin 1910).

## **Philosophy and Works**

Bacon did not propose any theory as actual philosophy but rather a method of developing philosophy in his *Mages Opus* (Novum Organum) argued that although philosophy at the time used the deductive syllogism to interpret, mature philosophers should instead proceed through inductive reasoning from fact to axiom to law. Before beginning this induction, the inquirer is to free his or her mind from certain false notions or tendencies which distort the truth. These tendencies are called Idols. These are of four kinds.

Bacon claimed that:

Any moral action is the action of human will which is governed by belief and spurred on by the passion.

Good habits - what aids men in directing their will toward the good.

No universal rules can be made as both situation and men's character differ.

Francis Bacon cites in his work world changing inventions: Printing, gun powder and the compass. These three have changed the whole face of the world and the state of things: first in thought and literature, the second in warfare, and the third in navigation which resulted in innumerable changes.

## **Bacon's Method**

*Novum Organum* is a philosophical work by Francis Bacon published in 1620. The title is a reference to Aristotle's work *Organon* Bacon detailed a new system of logic believed to be superior to the old ways of syllogism.

## **Influence**

Bacon's ideas about the improvement of the human lot were influential in the period between 1630 and 1650 among a number of parliamentarian scholars. During the Restoration, Bacon was commonly considered as a guiding spirit of the Royal Society founded under Charles II in 1660. In the nineteenth century, his emphasis on the induction was revived and developed by William Whewell among others (Hales 1962).

## **Bacon's Contribution to English Prose**

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English prose owes a good deal to Bacon way of writing. A critic rightly points out that Hooker and Bacon did great things for the development of English prose. When alliteration, antithesis, similes, etc., from “unnatural natural history” were common these two showed that English was as capable as the classics of serving the highest purpose of language.

### **Essay and Prose Style of Bacon**

The title Essay indicates Bacon’s purpose. The subject matter changes with the growth of his personal interests and experience. He writes in the first ten essays on everyday subject attractive to the student of men and affairs. In the essays, he is the man of the world rather than the philosopher who speaks in writing of the motives and duties. His noble ideals stand out clearly.

Bacon says, Goodness is the greatest of all virtues and dignities of the mind, being to character of the dignity and without it man is a busy, mischievous, no better than a kind of vermin (Bacon 1597).

The general tendency of his remarks on conduct is, be wary, gain trust but give it only most cautiously, foster your own virtues but do not expect them in others; aim at great ends to compass them use the weaknesses of human nature. In Bacon’s greatness as an orator lies the secret of his characteristic greatness as a writer.

According to Hugh walks, Bacon took one of the longest steps even taken in the evolution of English prose style.

Bacon’s love of quotations is also clear in his essays because the essay “Friendship” contains large number of allusions and illustrate Bacon’s argument and firm minds, need friendship whom they can open their hearts (Stunk, William and white 2000).

### **Bertrand Russell**

Bertrand Russell (18May 1852-2 Feb 1920) was a British Philosopher, logician mathematician historians socialist pacifist and social critic. He spent most of his life in England, he was born in Wales where he also died, aged 97. Russell led the British, revolt against idealism, in the early 1900s. He is considered one of the founders of analytic philosophy along with his predecessor and his prologue Wittgenstein and is widely held take one of 20 the century premises logicians.

Russell was a prominent anti war active, he championed free trade anti imperial in. Russell went to prison for his pacifist activism during World War I.

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Later he campaigned against Hitler. In 1950, Russell was awarded the Noble Prize in literature in recognition of his varied and significant writings in English (David & Irving 1981).

### **Views on Philosophy**

Russell is generally credited with being one of the founder of analytical philosophy. He was deeply impressed by Leibniz (1646-1716) and wrote on every major area of philosophy except aesthetics. He was particularly prolific in the field of metaphysics and logic (Art 1951)

### **Views on Society**

Political and social activism occupied much of Russell's time for most of his life which makes his prodigious and seminal writings on a wide range of technical and non technical subjects all the more remarkable. Russell remained politically active almost to the end of his life.

He also said, "no one can sit at the bedside of a dying child and still behave in God (Russell 1944).

### **Russell's Writings**

Russell wrote over eighty books and hundred articles on a wide variety of topics. The most complete listing his publication is in the Bibliography of Bertrand Russell.

### **Major Books by Bertrand Russell**

The problems of philosophy (1912).  
A History of western philosophy (1943).  
Logic and Knowledge 1956.( Hodges, John 2001)

### **Bertrand Russell's Prose Style**

Russell is one of the greatest masters of English prose. He revolutionized not only the subject matter but also the mode of expression. He has in him a happy blend of greatest philosopher and a great writer. He was awarded noble prize for literature in 1950.

His prose style possesses are very rare in the bulk prose. Russell has Justly been regarded as one of the great prose stylists of 20th century of course Russell's style sometimes becomes difficult for the average reader who comes across sentences which he has read for more than once in order to get the meaning.

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Russell's style appeals mainly to our intellectual and very little to our feelings or emotions. He uses words simply as tools to convey his meaning plain and effectively and not to produce any special effects. It is not colorful or gorgeous style. There are no "Jeweled phrases" in his writings or sentences. Russell's style is intellectually brilliant. He can condense an idea or a thought in a few words if he so desires. Russell is always direct, simple and lived. He knew that the complexity of expression leads to ambiguity.

He says "Happiness depends partly upon external circumstances and partly upon oneself." (Russell 1930)

Russell sentences clearly show Bacon's terseness. They are replete with so deep thoughts like those of Bacon that we may elaborate them in countless pages, many sentences are like proverbs replete with deep meanings like: "extreme hopes are born of extreme misery." "One of the most powerful sources of false belief is envy." "Ride of a race is even more harmful than national pride." (Stern Laurence Tristan Shady 2005)

Irony is a principal instrument of his style. He unionizes so called modern middle people. Russell makes frequent uses of wit and humor but his humor is generally not pure for of folk. Russell writes chaste prose and there is a rationalistic approach to life. He stresses the need of rationality which he leaves the reader in any doubt about what he has to say. He stresses the need of rationality which he calls skepticism in all spare of life. Each essay is logically well knit and self contained. In each essay, the development of the thought is continuous and strictly logical, with a close interconnection between one paragraph and another. It is style best suited to an advocate. There are no super of beauties in his style at all (University of Chicago Press 1993).

## **Comparison of both Scholars**

### **Leading qualities of prose style**

#### **Bacon's qualities**

Bacon's qualities are as under:

#### 1. Condensation and compactness

Many of the paragraphs and sentences are burdened with their insight of thought. He is a real intellectual personality. There is nothing to fill the aphorism but some good quantity of keen observation that is sound and grounded. This is that kind of condensed utterance which will not allow the reader a moment's leisure and which in its Spartan find senesce brevity has called forth the praise of all critics.

#### 2. Analytical clearness and suggestiveness

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He sees it in its nature relations and applications. It is a complete rhetorical and logical frame work with all the parts in due adjustment to each other. His style in his writings is suggestive rather than demonstrative. There special use there face is that of education rather than instruction. His great philosophical work the Norm organism affords an illustration of the analytical habit with out any parallel in our language.

### 3. Incisiveness

The reference here is to a crisp curt and clean cut style.

Everything super flow is removed. The truth is given in its essence. The bold terms conciseness, preciseness express it. Bacon was intellectually strong enough to use it write out abusing and its effect is telling. It is thus that he speaks in raise of Queen might trouble him to find one for Elizabeth “that God Almighty planted the first garden”.

Anyhow, Modern English and American prose were in need of this incisive quality. Bacon’s best prose, though written four centuries ago, is still read, not simply because it is in itself masterful.

### 4. Strength & Force

Bacon’s style is so much solid. It is the form of substance. It is itself substantial. The experience is disciplinary more then entertaining. We feel the healthful pressure of a strong mind and strong style and we are made strong by the contact. Bacon is one of best examples in literature of the true relation of thought to expression. Bacon never studied formal expression apart from the thought convict it .Bacon is fresh and full.

### 5. Imagination and illustration

This quality is especially noticeable as found connected with those already mentioned. It is questionable whether there is a more striking example in English Prose. This faculty in Bacon’s mind and art was eminently normal. Bacon went further then the Hooker, and bolds respect and higher place.

## **Versatility and Variety**

There is a true sense, therefore in which his prose say be said to all inclusive as to classes of style, History, Prose, Fiction, oratorical prose are all exhibited, verified and controlled by the didactic as the prime characteristic. Versatility in itself is not a mark of poor with many it is the very sign of weakness and means the superficial and shallow. His capacious mind demanded various outlets and forms of expression.

## **Leading Qualities of Bertrand’s Style**

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## 1. Lucidity

The first salient feature of Russell's style is its lucidity. Another is direct, simple and clear. He opens even a most complex issue with clarity. He is a reformer thinker and so clarity pays him most. Complexity of expression leads to ambiguity and that defects the very aim of a writer like him. He recorded his reactions and opinion without attempting literary flourishes.

## 2. Terseness

The next trait of Russell's style is a Baronial terseness. Many sentences read like epigrams and proverbs of deep meanings. Russell's sentences are pregnant with thoughts like those of Bacon. Russell's are well knit and systematic. They have continuity of thought.

## 3. Allusiveness

Another trait of Russell's prose is its allusiveness. He quotes from the Bible, Shakespeare, Roman and Greek writers. His quotations are harmoniously woven in to the texture of his thought.

## 4. Irony and Sarcasm

Russell makes frequent uses of wit and humor. It may be remembered that Russell's humor is generally not pure fun. It is ironical. Irony is a principle instrument of his style. He ironies the so called modern minded people in the belief that fashion alone should dominate opinion has great advantages.

## 5. Analytical and Rational

Russell was a profound thinker. His style is chiefly governed by his sense reason and not by his sense of emotions. His chief concern is to convey his ideas a rationalistic approach to life.

## 6. Long sentences

Like Ruskin, Russell also frames long sentences, but there is great organization of the matter in a logical manner.

## 7. Use of Rhetoric, Metaphors and Similes

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Russell makes a great use of the art of rhetoric to emphasize his point, but he differs from Burke or Carlyle in this respect. He is up to the point and very subtle. He predicts the fate of mankind in the era of a Third World war. C.E.M. Joan Writes “ Russell prose has” Clarity, grace, poise, lucidity, the pleasure of watching the operation of mind so completely master of its subject that it can afford to be at play with it.

## Conclusion

Through a comparison and contrast of both writers’ style, we find many similarities and contrastive points as both writers are essayist and philosopher belongs to aristocratic families, writer of social values, both are logical, analytical and rational writers in his prose style. We found versatility both of them. Bacon and Russell’s prose have many differences for example Bacon frequently put Latin quotations but Russell do not Bacon uses short sentences that attain epigrammatic and proverbial place in English language. Bacon used very complex and different language so it becomes difficult to understand for common reader but Russell uses very simple and elaborative long sentences. Bacon’s thought dispersed meditation while Russell’s are logical and unified. Russell’s thoughts are developed logically step by step and explain the subject very beautifully with the help of explains. Hence we can conclude that both writers have their own prose style. Bacon’s style is aphoristic. He uses Latin quotations short sentences while Russell’s style is Unified, ornate, lucid and use of long sentences.

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