

# Knowledge as Exploration and Conquest

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## The Intellectual and the Military Man

The existence of a partnership between knowledge and armies – and, connected with it, between knowledge and wars, conquests, and the entire apparatus of empires – has been affirmed since the time of Xenophon. The troops clear a path that the scholars follow, and an increase of knowledge is a side effect of the incursion. The great linguistic discoveries of the eighteenth century – that is, the Zend and Sanskrit languages – would have been impossible without the expansion of the French and British empires into Asia; and Bonaparte, in his foray into Egypt, was accompanied by a large contingent of scholars. After the uniformed troops march in, official scholarly missions follow. For example, in 1849, Italian archives were opened to French scholars as a result of the French occupation of Rome. Renan's access to Italian libraries, monasteries, and manuscript collections was a result of the presence of French troops in Italy. This was a period of preliminary analyses, of the publication of catalogues, and of amazement at the wealth of available documents. In brief, it was a period of successful compilation, of rapid and exhilarating erudition. It was a time when everything rang true. In 1860, it was once more Renan who set off, on the margins of the French intervention in Syria and Lebanon, in search of epigraphical materials. In fact, all of nineteenth-century French, German, and English archaeology follows in the wake of the colonial expansion of the various empires.

In our era, as the connections between scientific and military adventures have grown closer and more direct, it has become clear that the progress of knowledge depends, in numerous ways, on politico-military enterprises. However, the relationship between knowledge and conquest is probably not strictly causal. The fact that intellectual con-

quest often accompanies imperial conquest may rather be a result of a proximity in kind between these two enterprises. It is this proximity and resemblance that I propose to explore here.

Let us begin by recalling the atmosphere surrounding the discovery and conquest of the New World, five hundred years ago. An increase in knowledge was surely not the primary goal of the expeditionary conquests of the Age of Discovery; and yet the conquests did increase knowledge, enlarging and transforming our mental space as much as they overturned territories and political systems. The conquests also spread an idea of enterprise and success based on notions of risk, discovery, domination, and empire. If we explore the undertakings of knowledge in light of the ideas of these great expeditions, what does the nature of knowledge appear to be? What meaning do the terms greed, destruction, disorientation, foundation, risk, loss, theft, victory, and defeat have in the context of an inquiry into the nature of knowledge? What kind of exploration is knowledge, what kind of gain, what kind of domination?

More broadly, how – and in what way – is the enterprise of knowledge an enterprise of exploration, conquest, and control? Intellectual success, spatial movement, and geopolitical hegemony are all conceived in terms of spatial development, of territorial discovery and exploration, of taking possession, of exploitation and domination. Clearly, my aim here is not to describe the one adventure in terms of the other, but rather to clarify certain aspects of knowledge by emphasizing and highlighting some relevant characteristics. My inquiry will be based on the following question: what can we learn about the knowing mind if we analyze it as an exploring and conquering mind?

### The Wanderings of Reason

When speaking of the activity of knowing we have, to begin with, several metaphorical inventories, such as those used in jurisprudence and epic poetry; but the language of intellectual activity is, above all, a spatial language. We shall begin by investigating the spatial description of knowledge, which transforms space into a dimension of mind.

Kant, in *The Critique of Pure Reason*, probably offers the most striking example of an intense intellectual conceptualization of knowledge in spatial terms. Throughout the book, concepts of reason's activity are expressed in vividly spatial terms.

The essence of this territorial conception of the activity of knowing can be summarized by stating that knowing begins with an act of transgression. This temptation to transgress, this desire to go beyond the limitations of a particular field, is natural to human reason, and yet at the same is the source of all its problems: the source of its intellectual imperfection and existential discomfort. Indeed, the fall of metaphysics, the former queen of philosophy, was due to the temptation to go beyond the limits of reason. Having gone beyond those limits, metaphysics is now condemned to wander without home or kingdom, without property or jurisdiction, without anything to offer it a legitimate foundation, for it has nothing on which to base its activity.

Those who commit the Gnostic error are thus doomed to wander. Kant, it is well known, loved travel books; he was an avid reader of the narratives of famous voyagers; yet Kant believed that when thinking began to drift and wander the only result could be distress and – to repeat his frequently used term – humiliation. The accompaniment to such intellectual wandering is torment and storm, and the surrounding elements are unfriendly. Like a ship without port or haven, thought turns frantic and bewildered in this sea of insecurity. Solid ground is abandoned only in order to fly up into the clouds of illusion, or to sink into the abyss of confusion or the quagmires of doubt.

To stand “outside” is an unhappy experience. One must instead strive always for immobility and stability, in order to build a legitimate and durable structure on firm, enclosed ground. In this enclosure, which is also an arena, reason, now a judge, can observe the mortal struggle between various philosophical positions.

Certainly one must enter onto the royal path of science, but this is not a path on which one must constantly change direction in order to progress. Rather, it is entered by taking a single, unique step: the correct one, and in the right direction. Everything on this path is authorized and established from the beginning. Already, with this first step, one becomes part of a complete and well-ordered system; its form is perfect and need never be changed. To enter the royal path of science means to achieve immediate stability.

This imaginary sketch depicts a striking scene of storms and stresses. Its geography of ill-starred reason highlights the conflict between reason’s two constituent elements: its desire to go out, to go farther and beyond limits, and its desire for order, stability, legitimate possession, and limits.

### **An Empty or Full Space?**

Apart from the particularly striking example of Kant, our contemporary metaphorical representations of knowledge and the acquisition of knowledge are comprised of images that are fundamentally spatial, and even territorial, in nature: we speak of expansion, extension, openings, limits, as well as of field and sphere. What is the meaning of all this territorial language that we commonly apply to the field of knowledge? For example, we say that a new point of view creates a field of research and new cognitive space: is this space empty or full?

Let us begin by investigating the intense feeling provoked by being the first in doing something, the first to see this field of snow, to walk in this snow. Is this moment of discovery illusory? Such excitement accompanies all intellectual activity and especially marks, for each of us, the high point of the experience of understanding. For each of us? Of course we cannot say that each one of us experiences this if we limit ourselves to changes of great magnitude; as the history of science shows, great theoretical intuitions and radical conceptual leaps are extremely rare. Let us take then, for example, the case of a page of text that is already widely known and that has been thoroughly commented upon; suddenly "something different" appears on the page, a hitherto undiscovered meaning shines forth. Before our eyes the profile of the page changes; it is reinterpreted in light of a different and fecund approach that makes the text new. It is during these initial, spirited moments of discovery that new meanings seem to surface. Is this moment of discovery illusory?

Any new thought, even when limited in its scope and range, creates a feeling of having enlarged space. Whenever a new theory or interpretation is introduced, there is an accompanying sense of having created an intellectual plenitude where nothing existed before it – not even a sense of absence, because nothing was lacking or demanding a place for itself. In this space, on the contrary, there was perhaps a little extra confusion, a certain disorder or fragmentary debris, a little too much data, or an accumulation of disparate elements that had no place within the existent system of meaning. The intellectual innovation thus recenters the landscape; it integrates formerly surplus and fruitless elements into a coherent and new whole that suddenly enlarges the surrounding space by identifying a new sphere of the knowable.

This is similar to what happens when a new discipline is founded: an intuition (usually expressed as a metaphor) causes a new

area to appear, which begins as a new field. Its foundation is often purely declarative, that is, of a verbal nature. The metaphors thus provide preliminary notions that anticipate the concepts; they allow advances to be made in the field by orienting and characterizing it. By naming the field, the metaphors already mark it out for the work of thought. This is the heuristic function of metaphors, their elemental function; a function consisting of setting out boundary markers in order to take possession of a strange land. Since the field must possess its own notions in order to be thought about, these new signposts differentiate it, at the very outset, from other fields. Thanks to these metaphorical signposts, investigators can already move about, argue, empower; at the same time, the signposts serve to mark out a jurisdiction.

To remain within our spatial language, can we say that we have a case here of pure gain and harmless extension? Can we say that the new point of view simply appears on the scene, develops its perspective, and takes up its position without harm or damage, to no one's detriment?

We must be careful to distinguish between knowledge and meaning. From the point of view of meaning, and on the most general level of anthropology, we cannot call something null or neutral simply because it is not yet an object of knowledge; even that which cannot be discussed directly is not completely lacking in representation. Even something without a "place" is not completely inaccessible to the verbal imagination. The process of representation occurs as if there were potential interpretations held in reserve; after all, meaningful discourse infinitely transcends the limits of what is called knowledge. Sometimes meaningful discourse is based on a body of organized knowledge of a completely different order than our own; sometimes it is a discourse based not necessarily on a cognitive perspective, but rather on a gnomic or Gnostic one. For instance, wisdom or myth can assume responsibility for knowledge of the unknown. This potential discourse may appear to be confused, fuzzy, obscurantist; or perhaps it may appear to be superstitious, religious, or of a legendary nature. We can speak of a meaning whose effect is produced by the projection of fear or hope; and we can speak of non-rational attitudes. Even these attitudes, however, constitute an approach to the indeterminacy of the unknown; they say something about a disorienting experience and help give direction to an inquiry into the unpredictable.

Is there such a thing as a completely innocent and harmless initiative, that is to say, a rational act resulting either in the discovery of a

completely empty space (Antarctica) or revealing a place about which no definition had ever been agreed upon (such as the idea of intergalactic space)? It can be said that, in all cases, a new point of view turns preconceptions upside down. Change is upsetting; it is upsetting, for example, to the ideological interests of any religious orthodoxy and to many politico-economic interests. Even if the discovered space is not literally inhabited, it is always linked to other spaces, so that the preliminary act necessarily injures or destroys surrounding areas of which the discoverer may be unaware, like a pebble stirring up the waters into which it is thrown.

However, it may be objected that the preceding paragraph is false precisely because true knowledge is always innocent, since it eliminates false opinions. If a discipline drives clouds away and gains in power and prestige, this indeed is gain without harm or loss, since the elimination of prejudices and false conceptions is necessarily beneficial. It is as natural that truth annul what it replaces as it is desirable that the superior point of view alone occupy the site over which it rules in order to reign supreme.

This point of view has long held a respected position in the history of Western philosophy: In Western thought, truth is never held accountable for the wrong it does to the error it dispossesses; the misfortunes of vanquished or defeated points of view are never imputed to the victorious knowledge. Truth replaces and sets aside that which is not itself; and whatever doesn't disappear becomes an obstacle and hindrance to truth. The expulsions and destructions that accompany the progress of knowledge like a reverse image are an invisible dimension from the point of view of epistemological inquiry: they are not even an object of discussion. As a direct consequence of this attitude, the idea of burning up the Mayan codex – to cite but one example – becomes a good idea. But how are we to distinguish between the absolutism of truth and the absolutism of the conviction of truth? For those who are convinced of the absolute nature of their truth, and who want to uproot error at any cost, the establishment of a truth is tantamount to rejecting and annulling all that has preceded it. And, as the contemporary debate over alternative medicine demonstrates, science finds it virtually impossible to accept a coalition government.

#### **Filling Out or Making the Map of Knowledge?**

Perhaps we should pose the question of the acquisition of knowledge – that is, whether it takes place in an empty or full space – in a



different way. Is the process of inventing intellectual space an act of discovery or an act of construction? In other words, do intellectual discoveries occur within an undiscovered part of an already identified space? If this is the case, then the task of research is one of filling out and completing a map. Thus the question is this: is the essence of innovative research the exploration of a *terra incognita* whose existence and approximate location have already been identified? It is a fact that most professional scientific and historical research has proceeded along these lines. In the vast majority of cases, work is carried out in an identified space whose framework is given and whose categories are not questioned. In such cases, the act of research consists of a step by step analysis and incorporation of terrain – which indeed is an indispensable aspect of the acquisition of knowledge.

But the filling out of the map can also be, simultaneously and unintentionally, the subversion of the map. Since innovative research modifies the map on both a micro and macro level, it is an act of conception, the creation of a new domain of the known and, above all, of the knowable.

Is the work of knowledge an act of filling out or of begetting a map? Our answer to this question will depend on how the situation of the knowing subject is conceived. If we think of the intellect as facing nature, if it is a mirror of nature, if the work of the intellect is to observe the secrets of a world that precedes the mind, then the knowing subject is engaged in an act of recovery and discovery, of sifting, supplementing, and defining the encyclopedic map of knowledge. In this case, the system of knowledge, just like the natural world, is itself already given. On the other hand, if the constructing subject imposes its categories and begets its cognitive rubrics, then the subject plays an active role in the configuration of space, and its permanent duty is to construct and reconstruct this cognitive space.

However, it does not necessarily follow from this that the augmentation of space is merely an additive process. On the contrary, space is conceived here as organized; it is organized by the very organization of knowledge. Knowledge integrates the transformations of space and is itself partially transformed as a result. Even limited intellectual innovation recenters its surroundings and gradually remakes the mental landscape. As it does so, the organization of knowledge seeks, in a more or less far-reaching manner, a new equilibrium. The entire process also affects areas with which the new knowledge does not have a direct connection, and ultimately

transforms them too.

In other words, any innovative act proceeds by disturbing. The new material displaces what preceded it, marginalizing and sometimes annulling it. Aspects that were visible cease to be so, and areas of research that were once interesting are delegitimized and abandoned. It can easily be seen how, in the social sciences, questions that were once central cease to be so, sometimes temporarily, sometimes permanently. In this sense, it can be said that any gain simultaneously produces loss and rejection, and that a new point of view creates exclusion and damage.

Of course this does not apply only to the realm of defeated concepts and abandoned problems. There is also destruction and loss on far more concrete levels of the sociological ladder. Change causes damage to institutions and professional interests; to financial structures, power, authority, careers, and personal destinies.

Thus, in the structure of knowledge, even the most innovative act – which consequently sees itself as the most solitary – is already connected to other points of view, to other existences and institutions. Each wants its space and its scope; each wants to reign and dominate.

### **Seeing the Other**

Within the intellectual order, the first problem to be faced is not the kind of relation one will have with the other: one of oppression, domination, coexistence, syncretism, imitation, apprenticeship, and so forth. The first problem is simply in perceiving the other, of neither being unaware of, nor ignoring, the other; that is, neither being unaware of the other's actual existence, nor of knowing about its existence but remaining unaware that there is something to see, to investigate and to learn from.

In order for an intellectual encounter to take place, it is necessary for the other to be perceived and recognized as an object of knowledge and also – especially if the other is human – as a source and subject of knowledge. Ignorance is not only a principal cause of social and human problems; it is a major threat to civilization itself. It is also a threat to the formulation of thought. Cultural visibility is crucial, and seeing is a key question in intellectual discovery. What we consider uninteresting (and from which nothing is expected) is, for the most part, invisible to us: it can neither be located nor thought about.



Ray Bradbury, in *The Martian Chronicles*, describes humanity's colonization and solitary habitation of Mars. One day a truck driver suddenly spots a Martian driver going about his business exactly as the human driver is. The two drivers, shocked by their meeting, stare stupefied at each other for a split second. When the second passes, the two continue on their separate ways. Their meeting is without result: each of the two population groups remains convinced that it alone inhabits Mars.

Seeing is an event not only in the geopolitical but in the intellectual world as well, and it is rare for a revelation as intense as the one described by Bradbury to go unnoticed. That which has suddenly become visible henceforth exists and can no longer be neglected. When contact is made, an inevitable process is begun.

However, the consequences of this process prove to be fundamentally different when we compare the destiny of empires with the destiny of ideas. To be more concrete: while the exchanges and borrowings that follow actual historical conquests are always extremely ambivalent (as is the case, for example, with local religions and their syncretic rituals), metaphorical borrowings of terms and notions in the intellectual world are always positive.

What is most surprising about this process is that these intellectual borrowings are neither authorized nor repaid (or if there ever is a return to the starting point, it is now in a completely new context, where all meaningful relations are transformed). And it is only euphemistically that we can call these displacements of language borrowings: in fact, they are thefts. It is a matter of pillage, but a positive pillage, an idealistic pillage that causes no damage.

In the first place, there is no damage because the appropriation is, by itself, a sign of attention and acknowledgment. By utilizing and putting the other to work, we demonstrate our awareness of the other's value, achievement, and interest to us. Also, the utilitarian nature of such a recognition – that is, seeking direct use, for oneself, of something that has worked somewhere else – is quite typical in human affairs. This is the value-creating effect of the looter: that which is stolen has value. Although this type of acknowledgment lacks dialogue and courtesy, it is nevertheless an homage from the user.

Moreover, such metaphorical pilfering harms neither the borrowed notions nor the sphere from which the borrowing comes. In this case taking and stealing are not acts of violence, because they strip nothing from their sphere of origin: if a new way of speaking is

henceforth used in a different sphere, this can only add to value-creating harmonies. It is as if, in the case of borrowings and theft, intellectual reality as such is more euphonic than reality itself.

### The Gaze of Others

It is in imaginary utopias that we find the most idealized descriptions of the results of contact with others (that is, as these contacts impinge on the native populations). Usually these visits and utopian investigations are described as stays of apprenticeship that have no untoward effects on the local population. Most often, the visitor departs without having had any effect whatsoever on the local state of affairs. In the utopias in which the visitor marries a young local woman, there is some change in the local situation but not a worsening. Whether the new couple decides to stay where it is (as in Belamy's *Looking Backwards* or Gilman's *Herland*) or to depart for the outside world (as in Cabet's *Icarie* or Butler's *Erewhon*), the result is general harmony. From the point of view of the local inhabitants, the romance, although it may have modified the conditions that prevailed before the arrival of the visitor, has in no way brought a violent change to the community.

The utopian genre perhaps represents a vision of the innocence of the great conquering expeditions. The narratives often depict euphoric contacts without loss or damage, that is, fanciful images of visits that did not occur.

But the relationship of the mind to other elements is clearly of a more complex nature than utopian narratives of travels to exotic civilizations or the utilitarian, one-way pillage that nourishes its conceptual metaphors. One way or another the knowing subject, or the knowing point of view, cannot avoid a confrontation with several categories of otherness: objects to know about (e.g., new natural objects), other conceptions of life (i.e., novel conceptual outlooks), and other knowing subjects. Relations are established, but what is the nature of these relations? How does exploratory and innovative knowledge operate in its relationship to others (i.e., other data, other points of view, other inhabitants)?

For the ethos of knowledge, the question of the perception of the other, the question of how we gaze at the other and the other at us, is a difficult one. Indeed, once again, it concerns a dimension of experience that has rarely been reflected upon in the context of knowledge. Montaigne is one of the rare thinkers to have integrated

this question into his general outlook. In order to make palpable the otherness of other points of view and the otherness of other knowing subjects, he created an imaginary contest of competing gazes.

While humanism consists of perceiving the other, then the others, and entering into relations with them, relativism consists of considering the other as a full partner and conceiving of oneself as one among others. Montaigne's brand of relativism – just like the relativism of all his contemporaries – is in no way identical with contemporary cultural relativism. Yet an essay like *The Cannibals* manages to draw a kind of humanist circle that sees otherness and is not terrified by it. On the contrary, the essay tries to make otherness visible to us and to give otherness itself the right to see. In *The Cannibals* Montaigne criticizes "our" vision of "others" and communicates to us the vision of us that the gaze of the other might see. It is a text that places and displaces our ideas of near and far, different and similar, surprising and familiar, in order to transform and remake our notion of what constitutes legitimacy.

It will, of course, be objected that Montaigne's version of reciprocity is false. It is a Eurocentric, pseudo-dialogue because the contest of gazes goes only in one direction. The lesson is for "our" use and benefit, as was the fascination with exoticism in eighteenth-century French criticism; in both cases, the "others" who watch us serve only to further our own understanding of ourselves. And this in fact was the case until the end of the eighteenth century, when, at last, a more concrete anthropological curiosity about the spectacle of human diversity arose.

It is true that Montaigne's cannibals are immediately forced into the mold of a necessary, knee-jerk exoticism that serves the purposes of the European subject; and yet to have given them this role at all was itself no negligible achievement. If we keep in mind that lucidity has its conditions and that it is impossible to encompass all attitudes in a single situation and moment, and if we also remember that putting something to work for oneself is a way of acknowledging and appreciating its value, then it can be said that the fragile intellectual relation that Montaigne establishes between "us" and "them" is not a particularly bad basis on which to establish relations. Surely it is a partial, imperfect, directed relation, and when seen from a point of view that does not coincide with Montaigne's it is certainly unsatisfactory; and yet Montaigne nevertheless recognizes the moral, critical, and cognitive importance of anthropological otherness. He highlights points of view that are, in our own

terms, legitimate and meaningful. On the other hand, the only desire that epistemological otherness excited in Francis Bacon was a wish to destroy it.

### **The Power to Torture**

Let us now turn to Francis Bacon, whose exclusive and totalitarian attitude toward knowledge has earned him the title of the Cortès of knowledge. According to Bacon, there is only one legitimate point of view. All other ways of seeing things are caused by distortions, lacunas, substitutions, or oversights; in short, by the regrettable and illegitimate effects of a variety of errors. According to this kind of analysis, intellectual space is congested with obstacles and traps that form the basis of false opinions. The scaffolding of knowledge is crowded, but crowded with error: pathologies against which one must guard, and powerful, destructive tendencies that Bacon identifies with the worship of idols.

Idols are a permanent source of error, since they produce a play of illusions and false appearances. In other words, idols are both false and dangerous. They are a fundamental trap because they create artificial obstacles to knowledge. This is why the epistemological obstacle is demonized: although it doesn't exist, it must be stamped out. Ultimately, Bacon's denunciation of idols takes on pathetic overtones: their eradication is portrayed not only as a matter of the health of thought but as its very salvation.

While trying to discredit the idea of a spontaneous play of opinions, attitudes, and customs, Bacon simultaneously devoted much time and energy to depicting the role of the scholar. According to Bacon, anyone devoted to research should be either in or near the seat of power. Normatively, this notable person ought to be rich and powerful. We are treated here to a description of a lord of science in all his pomp and splendor: it is an image of a majestic and authoritative science. This ambitious dream runs from Plato to Saint-Simon and encompasses the peculiarities associated with Bacon's vision; this vision also includes an image of delegated power, a kind of vice-royalty, and a political system based on successful explorations, the symbol of triumphant conquest.

In order to describe the activities of scientific research, Bacon turns to another figure of authority and decision with which he was familiar; he compares the scientist to a judge. Bacon's judge, however, not only possesses the key to the scientific experience but also,

quite surprisingly, turns out to be the only judge and therefore possesses the sole point of view and is the only actor in the drama; he is a judge without jury, plaintiffs, or law.

We cannot turn to this judge to resolve disagreements or settle disputes; his function is not to deal with problems that exist or are presented to him. On the contrary, he himself creates the problems, he assesses them and can do whatever he wants with them. The sole purpose of his wide-ranging experimental activity is to bring forth testimony from every possible source.

In order to force witnesses to appear before him, he must spend his time carrying out experiments that will generate testimony. His activity amounts to a never-ending interference with the natural course of events. He torments nature and disturbs the play of its materials; he damages, tears up, amputates, and does violence to the materials in order to force their testimony and extract a confession from them.

These experiments are carried out haphazardly, in order merely to see and to produce variations in the material – thus without any preliminary hypothesis. This is the basis of Bacon's distinction between *recensio* and *juducium*, that is, between the gathering of data and its interpretation, and between experimentation and theorization (this is the positivist distinction that played such an important role in nineteenth-century science, and that is being so heavily criticized today by philosophers of science).

The experiments of this judge twist his natural materials in every possible way, thereby multiplying the groans and squeals of nature. In this way nature's sufferings become more articulate. For his part, the judge-inquisitor is listening for relevant noise: he seeks revelatory confessions and clarifying information.

This despotic judge is spiritually close to the witch-hunters of the seventeenth century, who arose with the birth of science. Their torture of witches provided the basis for the emergence of a kind of ethnography of the demonic. This was a fantastic, but more or less coherent, pseudo-science whose results were obtained by "rigorous," "modern" methods: using torture as its foundation, the inquisitors were able to generate a general picture that was later supplemented by further confessions based on the inquisitors' questions. Gradually a complete and detailed picture of human interactions with the devil emerged.

The results obtained by the Baconian judge remain essentially heterogeneous, because he works without preconceptions or guid-

ing hypotheses. Yet this does not prevent him from acting like an inquisitor. It is up to him to take the initiative of inquiry and to bear the burden (i.e., the methodological burden) of his conduct. His inquiry is open, indeterminate, and violent; its general goal is to discover the truth on the basis of particular established facts. But this perpetual inquiry does not lead to trial. Indeed, there is no judgment: the judge may be active and even aggressive, but he does not speak. He is a judge who does not know the law, because the law is hidden and dispersed in nature. He wants to discover this law – it is the purpose of all his efforts – and he hopes that martyred nature will reveal it to him.

### **Method and Violence**

There are clearly elements of cruelty in this methodical exploration of nature: it is a vision of scientific conquest that reduces the investigation of the other (the natural world) to a purely instrumental dissection. And it is well known how large a role this imprecise and, in many ways, inappropriate image of the judge – an image combining aggressive authority, decisiveness, and a need to intervene – has played in the history of the formation of the scientific ethos.

Knowledge cannot be achieved without violence, and in this article I have pointed to several aspects of violence, aggression, and intolerance that crop up in the act of knowing, and particularly in the scientific act. How are we to understand this element of violence, of compulsion and exclusion? Might this tendency toward brutality be weakened or even eliminated by a change of attitude?

This question has traditionally been given two different answers that follow two different lines of thought. According to one, violence is part of the motivation behind all undertakings devoted to the acquisition of knowledge; that is to say, violence is inherent in the desire to know. What is in question in this definition is the root of the desire that motivates the search for knowledge. According to this perspective, we can grant to intellectual life its status as a separate order, with its own separate values and interests, even its own way of life; however, its real driving force is no different from the driving force of all other human activities. Since the same springs drive everything, it should be expected that undertakings devoted to the acquisition of knowledge manifest the same violent characteristics as all other undertakings.

The second line of thought is carried out from within the struc-



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ture of knowledge. In this case, the violence of knowledge is not attributed to its motivation; rather it is found in the way knowing is carried out, the way it proceeds, that is, in its method. As can clearly be seen in Bacon, and in a different way in Descartes, the cruelty lies in the ideal of the method.

It is methodological violence that makes possible exclusive knowledge. A nonexclusive mind can be intuitive, inclusive, holistic; its intuitive, synchronous and inclusive vision allows for nonaggressive contemplation – even loving contemplation. To the extent that human research is analytic, discursive, and linear, it can advance only by cutting. To make its way in the virgin forest, this knowledge simplifies and attacks, it imposes, hews, and destroys. Knowledge is bound to its method and therefore, in this case, to attack – and therefore to a conquering exploration that cuts, hacks, and mistreats.

*Translated from the French by Thomas Epstein*