

UNITED WISDOM

Using Another Person’s Advice While Remaining the Author of Your Decision

Freedom and Action

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Epigraph

> *“private opinion”*

Francis Bacon, “Of Counsel,” line 470 in the selected version. A short fragment of his own prose. In the court setting, Bacon contrasts a separately obtained opinion with an answer before other people. This is historical reasoning about seeking counsel, rather than proof that a private conversation is always free or that its result must be accepted unconditionally. Primary text.

What this article is about

Anton wants to return to studying a language for a month. He has two evenings a week, and his immediate purpose is to understand short texts for his own reading. Irina suggests a conversation group: regular meetings helped her continue. Leonid suggests individual assignments every day, the way he prepared for an examination. Both offer something useful, but their purposes, schedules and forms of participation differ. Anton tries to take the best of each answer. Will several good parts make a suitable whole? The scene is fictional; the article assesses no particular course or proven way to learn.

We examine authorship of a decision through combining different kinds of advice. What assumptions do they contain, are the actions compatible, and why does one contribution receive priority? Bacon and Plutarch supply limited historical comparisons; the procedure remains our editorial proposal. The voluntary exercise concerns a small plan on paper. It tests no people and promises no correct result. Its limited purpose is to clarify how someone assembles a decision from other people's information, assessments and recommendations.

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I. Advice may address different tasks

Irina imagines someone seeking conversation practice and meetings with other participants. Leonid imagines preparation for an external examination. Anton currently wants to read and has two evenings. These subjects concern one language but do not coincide. Comparing the persuasiveness of the advisers immediately can obscure the difference between the questions themselves. It is more precise first to ask which desired result each proposal concerns. A shared topic provides no shared measure of usefulness. An action suitable for an examination does not automatically receive the same justification for unhurried reading. A conversation meeting can have value without matching that immediate purpose.

Advice contains more than the suggested action. It includes information about possibilities, an image of success, an expectation of available time and sometimes an unstated condition. Irina speaks about regularity because meetings sustained participation in her own case. Leonid speaks about daily assignments because he was preparing for a deadline. Their experience can be heard without becoming a single general recipe. Anton needs to distinguish a reported observation from the assumption that similar conditions exist for him. Until that transition is justified, the experience remains useful information about another case rather than an established property of the new plan.

The initial purpose need not remain unchanged. Anton may become interested in conversation practice and genuinely choose it. The assembly then begins by clarifying its subject: he now wants more than reading. That is a new decision, rather than a concealed refinement of the old one. If his desire has not changed, that too provides clarity. Two recommendations need not carry equal weight simply because both were requested. Their place depends on their relation to the chosen task. Retaining this distinction matters: otherwise each appealing detail quietly expands the plan into another undertaking that nobody initially considered as a whole.

II. Different parts of an answer have different grounds

Irina's answer can be divided into three parts: meetings take place on specified evenings, conversation helped her, and she recommends that Anton attend. The first is a checkable statement about a schedule, the second is testimony of experience, and the third is a proposal for someone else. One does not automatically confirm the others. The current schedule still needs establishing; a pleasant recollection does not prove the same effect for Anton. This division does not devalue the answer. It allows a particular part to be used on suitable grounds, instead of accepting or rejecting the entire account because of one doubtful transition.

Leonid also combines information and assessments. He had daily assignments, an external deadline and an examination result. Anton can learn that a format exists without adopting its earlier deadline or measure of success. Selecting one assignment for personal reading already

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changes the original proposal. Leonid's account does not establish that his experience tested this reduced version. This is an important boundary of synthesis: a borrowed part has an origin, while the new combination needs its own grounds. It cannot be presented as ready advice offered in precisely this form when the person was speaking about a different whole.

Missing information also deserves notice. Nobody has said how much time Anton will need, how access works or whether the texts suit his current level. These gaps should not be filled with an average between two confident answers. Sometimes they require one factual clarification; sometimes they can remain open for a small safe attempt. The number of advisers does not remove uncertainty. Two accounts of personal success do not measure a third person's conditions. Assembly becomes more honest when the boundary stays beside the contribution: what is actually known, what is assumed, and what does not yet provide grounds for action.

III. A condition must survive the transfer of advice

Leonid's proposal may make sense when daily study is possible. Anton takes only material for two evenings from it. That transfer is permitted as a personal idea, but the changed condition needs naming. If the earlier argument depended on daily repetition, it does not automatically retain the same force under a new schedule. Anton needs to understand why the chosen part still suits, or acknowledge that this remains an assumption. There is no requirement to reproduce someone else's path exactly. He may depart from it while accurately retaining which earlier argument no longer supports the new combination after that departure.

Irina's condition differs: the group is a shared meeting in which people follow an accepted format. If Anton wants to come occasionally and read his own material, that need not be the activity she described. Such an option may exist; it needs clarification. The benefit of shared participation cannot be taken, its participation requirements excluded, and the conclusion left unchanged. The relation between a condition and an expected effect needs consideration. An inconvenient condition is not necessarily an irrelevant detail. Sometimes another format proves more suitable. The decision benefits from the distinction even though the original recommendation does not enter it.

In the selected essay, Bacon considers a ruler seeking counsel. He distinguishes business from attention to the person, and a separately obtained opinion from an answer before others. This is court political philosophy, rather than contemporary research on learning. We take a limited question: is the subject on which an opinion is actually offered sufficiently clear? His ideas about power, appropriating reputation and arranging a council are not our ethical model. In Anton's case the historical comparison draws attention to an answer's composition and the circumstances of obtaining it. It proves neither that private advice is more reliable, that an adviser conceals self-interest, nor that Bacon tested our paper exercise.

IV. Compatibility needs its own examination

Two recommendations can be suitable separately yet fail to fit one plan. Irina proposes two evenings of meetings; Leonid proposes assignments on those evenings and throughout the remaining week. Adding the usefulness of the parts creates no new free week for Anton. Compatibility needs consideration first in time, then in purpose and participation. This does not require calculating an entire life beforehand. The visible clash can be enough. If two parts require the same unavailable resource, their combination cannot be justified merely by each having a good separate argument.

There can be a less obvious incompatibility. One recommendation assumes a predetermined sequence, while another assumes choosing subjects freely by interest. Each can suit different circumstances. Yet simultaneously promising to follow an external sequence and alter it according to mood is more than flexibility. The actual order and permitted changes need defining. Otherwise the new combination contains two different expectations of one action. Clarification helps form a limited whole: for example, freely choosing two texts without claiming that Leonid's complete preparation sequence has thereby been followed.

The parts may become compatible at a different scale. Anton considers one evening of independent reading and one voluntary meeting once a suitable format is confirmed. This is his composite proposal. Neither Irina nor Leonid must recognise it as an exact continuation of their own advice. Their possible disagreement can be worth hearing, but agreement from both should not be presented as necessary proof of authorship. The assembled programme remains an assumption about a suitable action. Its merit lies in the parts' clear relation to one chosen task and the absence of an already known contradiction between conditions, rather than the number of borrowed recommendations retained.

Compatibility does not establish mutual reinforcement. Two activities may leave each other unobstructed without producing the overall effect expected from their combination. If Anton thinks a meeting will make reading easier, that is a separate hypothesis about their connection. Irina's account of pleasant conversation does not yet establish it. Both actions can be retained on different personal grounds without promising an extra benefit from combining them. This avoids substituting an appealing whole for examination: a carefully assembled plan can be understandable and still untested. Its description only needs to distinguish no visible clash from a positive basis for the expected interaction. The former need not become the latter to make the decision feel complete.

V. Priority follows a ground, rather than loudness

When two parts cannot be combined, a priority must be chosen or both declined. Anton may favour information about available evenings because his schedule is a current constraint. That does not make Irina's opinion generally more important than Leonid's. On another question, Leonid's account of working with texts may be more useful. Weight belongs to a specific ground in a particular task. Confidence, friendship and an earlier successful result can affect an impression without resolving the clash between two requirements by themselves. The distinction allows a choice to be explained without generally ranking the advisers' worth.

Sometimes a priority expresses a personal preference. Anton chooses reading while allowing that a conversation group could provide a different interesting result. He need not prove reading superior for everyone. His decision can name the selected purpose and available conditions without turning a preference into a verified fact about educational quality. A changed purpose would change the information's weight. This possibility does not make the earlier choice dishonest. Dishonesty would arise in its description if a personal preference were retrospectively presented as a general conclusion supposedly following equally from both other people's accounts.

Counting identical recommendations cannot settle priority alone. Three people may repeat one recommendation based on the same experience or on retelling one another. These are several voices, but not necessarily several independent grounds. Agreement sometimes helps clarify an observation; sometimes it simply strengthens a familiar formulation. A small decision requires no investigation of every opinion's origin. It is enough not to describe repetition as independent verification. Anton can acknowledge his friends' shared interest while separately checking the one significant schedule fact on which participation depends.

VI. The composite decision needs a description in your own words

After selection, Anton can describe a small plan: read two accessible texts during the allocated evenings over the next fortnight and separately ask about one meeting's conditions. This connects actions with his purpose without promising to proceed to an entire course. Leonid's conversation supplied the idea of independent assignments; Irina's supplied the possibility of supportive company. The schedule limits and choice of immediate scale belong to Anton. This need not become a detailed report. It reveals what emerged from the combination and which question remained outside the decision, instead of leaving two answers without a personal overall subject.

The assembly should not conveniently be attributed to one adviser. Saying Leonid recommended precisely two evening attempts with an optional meeting would change the account: Leonid offered a different complete recommendation. Its useful part and Anton's own modification can be named honestly. This preserves an idea's origin without transferring responsibility for a combination the person never proposed. Nor does it require publicly listing private conversations. Accurate authorship permits no disclosure of someone else's circumstances. A private note or personal understanding can suffice when no external presentation is needed.

Using your own words does not mean having no borrowed words or influences. Anton may use a familiar expression first heard from Irina and still have personal grounds for action. He might invent a new formulation while leaving every original assumption unexamined. Verbal originality is therefore different from substantive authorship. The important transition here moves from parts to a whole: why they fit, which condition changed, and what the person actually chooses. This transition requires neither inventing a new method nor proving that no acquaintance could independently reach a similar decision.

VII. Changing an assumption changes the assembly

Suppose Anton learns that the meeting takes place only on an evening he cannot allocate. The new information concerns one ground without devaluing Irina's entire message. Company can remain a useful idea, while the particular meeting stays outside the immediate plan. The initial combination need not be defended to demonstrate consistency. Revision is more precise when it names the part removed and the reason. Independent reading need not disappear along with an unsuitable meeting, and Leonid's entire proposal does not automatically become correct merely because another activity is currently unavailable.

The purpose can also change. After a fortnight Anton finds reading less interesting than conversation. The original measure of usefulness then needs reconsideration. This differs from disproving schedule information: the former changes the chosen result; the latter changes an available condition for obtaining it. The distinction helps avoid explaining every new decision through the supposed error of earlier advice. The advisers may have addressed the earlier subject or honestly reported earlier opportunities. The person now assembles a different whole. A changed interest need not become an accusation before a new direction can be chosen.

A composite plan can remain conditional where a ground has not been checked. Anton can describe the meeting as a possible addition rather than a confirmed part. Clarification can then change its place without abandoning the entire decision. Conditionality does not mean every line is uncertain. Two allocated evenings can be a real limit, reading a chosen purpose, and access still unknown. These statuses should not be averaged into a general feeling of

readiness. Clarity follows their distinction: which part already has grounds, which depends on an answer, and what is permitted before that answer without creating new obligations for others.

VIII. The result concerns the assembled version

If Anton reads one text instead of two after the fortnight, that is the result of his particular attempt. It does not yet show that Leonid's advice was poor or Irina misunderstood the task. Assembly changed the original conditions, and other circumstances may remain unknown. A next decision benefits from identifying which part was actually done and what obstructed another. Every inconvenience should not be attributed to one source simply because its proposal is easier to recall. Nor should a useful change prove every earlier suggestion. Considering the result retains the composition and scope of the version actually attempted.

Anton may discover that reading suited him but the amount chosen was too large. The amount then changes, without necessarily changing the entire purpose or possibility of independent study. Material might prove inaccessible, which concerns a specific condition. The reason an evening did not work may remain unknown. The article does not require a complete cause before any next step. It asks that the subject of revision stay precise. This connects it with error, failure and hypothesis: that topic distinguishes grounds for change, whereas here attention concerns a decision's composition from several other people's recommendations.

A successful combination acquires no universal force either. If two evenings suited Anton, he can describe his case and suggest that someone notice their schedule. No tested programme for everyone has emerged. Changed conditions matter particularly when he becomes an adviser himself. Otherwise a new recipient hears a complete recipe without learning which parts were removed, which happened to be available, or which result was assessed. An account of experience remains more precise when the small composite version is visible. It need not assert that everyone who participated in the conversations jointly invented and confirmed that version.

IX. Pleasantness of tone does not establish an answer's quality

Combining advice can favour an answer that is more pleasant to hear, or one that sounds sterner. In the selected passage, Plutarch distinguishes frank friendship from inappropriate harshness. This is ancient ethical writing rather than a classification of contemporary advisers. The comparison is limited: tone does not automatically show how well a proposal addresses the matter and conditions. A direct answer may name a significant incompatibility; a pleasant one may report an accurate schedule. Their content can be considered without assigning obligatory sincerity to the former or hidden calculation to the latter. No new direct quotations from Plutarch's broader collection are added here.

If Leonid insists harshly on daily work, Anton may distinguish a useful question about regularity from an unacceptable form of conversation. That possibility creates no obligation to stay. Under threats or coercion the joint exercise ends. Even in a calm exchange a person may decline to analyse every answer. Assembly needs only an available, suitable amount of information. Severity does not make an argument true; insufficiently expressive delivery need not remove an accurate fact's significance. This is a limited distinction between content and form, rather than a demand to endure pressure to prove an ability to hear the truth.

Nor is unanimous assessment of the final plan required. Irina may favour more company, Leonid more assignments, and Anton his small version. Disagreement indicates different preferences until a particular contradiction or inaccurate statement is identified. It can remain beside the chosen decision. An unavailable evening or unconfirmed condition, however, provides a substantive reason to revise regardless of whether the person's general approach is appealing. The assembly thereby remains open to particular clarifications without turning into endless voting about which acquaintance finally approves the personal plan.

X. Authorship appears in the transition from parts to a whole

Anton began with two different proposals on one broad subject. Now distinct information, personal experience, conditional recommendations, clashing schedules and his chosen immediate scale are visible. The decision still relies on others' assistance, but its composition is not concealed. Authorship here appears through choosing a purpose, examining compatibility and clearly treating altered conditions. It requires no claim of freedom from influence. Appreciation can concern a particular useful contribution without making an adviser the author of the whole new combination or appropriating their experience as a personally travelled path.

This differs from advice from an older person. That question considers whether age, experience and accepted guidance create an obligation to surrender a choice. No such basis is assumed here: Anton already chooses personally but holds several unlike materials for a

decision. Our subject also differs from an adviser substituting a question and from the costs an action imposes on affected people. The particular concern here is the transition to a compatible whole. Those neighbouring questions may matter separately, yet their answers do not replace examination of the assembly itself. The familiar word advice should not conceal the articles' different tasks.

The limited result can be named without promising success: the choice, origins of its contributions and conditions of their combination are clearer. A ground may remain unknown; a useful recommendation may stay outside the plan. Neither destroys authorship. Its description becomes weaker when a personal combination is presented as another person's complete, confirmed recipe or contradictory assumptions remain unnoticed. The next step can be small, postponed or absent. Accurate synthesis requires no obligatory action merely to prove that the conversations have already produced a finished result.

What this means in practice

If you wish, choose two recommendations about a small safe task or invent a fictional example. Exclude medical, legal, financial and dangerous decisions. Note your immediate question. From each answer identify one fact, assessment or recommendation and a condition under which it would make sense. A gap can stay empty. You need not disclose private matters, contact advisers or prove why their answers took that form. The exercise concerns your notes rather than testing people.

Consider whether the selected parts fit in time, purpose and required participation. If not, name one clash. If they do, describe a small overall proposal and note which part you changed. Separately name your own ground for priority: a checked condition, chosen preference or still open assumption. Create no obligations to others merely to fill the note. A paper version permits no actual action and establishes no real participant's agreement.

You can stop at an unresolved question, decline the combination or retain it conditionally. The narrow result is a clearer composition of a possible decision and its grounds' limits. It proves neither educational quality, the advisers' sincerity nor a next step's effectiveness. The note can stay private or be deleted. Stop under threats or coercion; no explanation of refusal is required. Leaving the exercise unfinished does not turn assistance into a debt or create an obligation to obtain identical approval from two people whose recommendations were only partly used.

Key quotation

> *“free counsel”*

Bacon, the same essay, final paragraph, line 477. A short fragment of his own prose. He warns the ruler that revealing an inclination too openly can turn counsellors' answers into pleasing responses. The historical court role is not transferred to a contemporary acquaintance. The distinction here concerns independent consideration of a matter and an answer shaped beforehand to fit a desired result; it does not test another person's hidden motive. Primary text.

Connections between traditions

Bacon's counsel at court and Plutarch's frank friendship belong to different ethical and social settings. Their comparison raises a question about an answer's relation to the matter and its recipient. Our account of authorship in personal decisions remains independent editorial reasoning.

Comparison	Shared question	Difference and boundary
Bacon ↔ Plutarch	Does counsel address the matter or primarily maintain favor?	Court politics and ancient frank friendship are not models of modern consultation.
Bacon ↔ our account of authorship	How does using counsel relate to a later decision?	Appropriating another person's reputation as described by Bacon is not adopted as an ethical ideal.
Plutarch ↔ a free response	Is severity of tone sufficient to make advice useful?	Criticism of untimely harshness establishes no modern psychological classification of people.
Experience account ↔ recommendation	What is actually being offered?	Testimony of participation and a proposed next action have different grounds. This is our editorial distinction.
Gratitude ↔ agreement	How can assistance be acknowledged while workload remains bounded?	Valuing a conversation does not automatically promise repetition of someone else's path.

Sources

• Francis Bacon. The Essays or Counsels, Civil and Moral; Of Counsel. Collection with its final revision in 1625; Gutenberg 575 electronic version, whose precise printed basis was not established. The selected essay “Of Counsel” was read completely, lines 454–477 through the following essay's boundary at 478. Reading the entire collection is not claimed. Tiny quotations belong to Bacon's own prose, rather than embedded biblical or Latin statements.

• Plutarch. Plutarch's Morals; How One May Discern a Flatterer from a Friend. A. R. Shilleto translation; George Bell and Sons, London, printed edition1898, with a preface dated March1888; Gutenberg23639. Metadata, contents, and selected passages i, lines 1683–1687, and xxiv–xxv, lines 1886–1895, were read. This is not the complete essay or collection. A paraphrase about frankness and untimely harshness is used here; no new Plutarch quotations are added. Embedded words of other authors are excluded.

Russian quotation fragments are editorial translations. The sources establish neither course suitability, adviser quality, nor practice effectiveness. Historical online availability establishes no universal reuse permission. Bacon's shared reservation covers the complete underlying work, both languages, and known history without a fresh allowance for a separate essay.

Tags

advice, recommendation, authorship, decision, assistance, trust, choice, grounds, purpose, criterion, conditions, experience, timetable, workload, learning, language, gratitude, agreement, refusal, pause, revision, interest, responsibility, promise, influence, Bacon, Plutarch, friendship, philosophy, practice, independence, United Wisdom

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