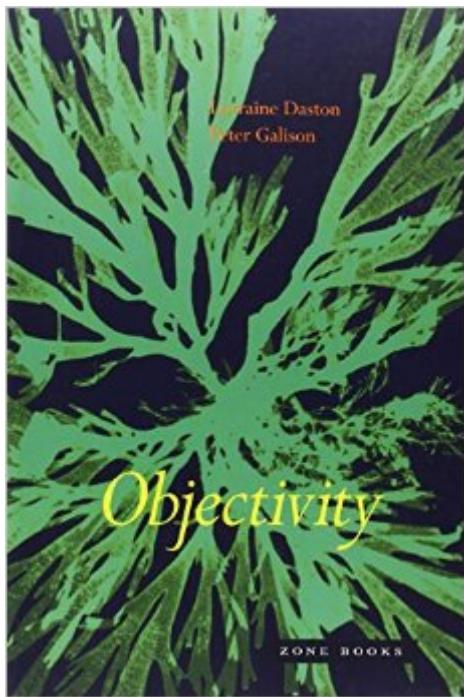


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# Objectivity



## Synopsis

Objectivity has a history, and it is full of surprises. In *Objectivity*, Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison chart the emergence of objectivity in the mid-nineteenth-century sciences -- and show how the concept differs from its alternatives, truth-to-nature and trained judgment. This is a story of lofty epistemic ideals fused with workaday practices in the making of scientific images. From the eighteenth through the early twenty-first centuries, the images that reveal the deepest commitments of the empirical sciences -- from anatomy to crystallography -- are those featured in scientific atlases, the compendia that teach practitioners what is worth looking at and how to look at it. Galison and Daston use atlas images to uncover a hidden history of scientific objectivity and its rivals. Whether an atlas maker idealizes an image to capture the essentials in the name of truth-to-nature or refuses to erase even the most incidental detail in the name of objectivity or highlights patterns in the name of trained judgment is a decision enforced by an ethos as well as by an epistemology. As Daston and Galison argue, atlases shape the subjects as well as the objects of science. To pursue objectivity -- or truth-to-nature or trained judgment -- is simultaneously to cultivate a distinctive scientific self wherein knowing and knower converge. Moreover, the very point at which they visibly converge is in the very act of seeing not as a separate individual but as a member of a particular scientific community. Embedded in the atlas image, therefore, are the traces of consequential choices about knowledge, persona, and collective sight. Objectivity is a book addressed to anyone interested in the elusive and crucial notion of objectivity -- and in what it means to peer into the world scientifically.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Objectivity represents the culmination of years of research on the part of Lorraine J. Daston and Peter Galison - two of the best science historians today. This volume is an amazing read for anyone interested in science studies, history of science and technology, and even media studies. I read this whole book for my Ph.D qualifying exams. It's absolutely riveting. In sum, the book covers three major movements in the institution of science regarding notions of truth and representation. The idea of scientific objectivity is actually a very recent phenomenon. What we usually forget is that the community and historical institution of research science has always been a SOCIAL phenomenon, and thus subject to change over time that reflects the evolving relationship between human actors and their understanding of the world. Objectivity, in the sense of removing the inherent error in human subjectivity and observation from the process of scientific judgement, has not always been a part of the way the scientific community approaches data. It only arose around the invention of the film camera, which allowed scientists to slow down and capture moments of phenomena that occurred too quickly for the human eye to observe in process. As a consequence, the scientific community began to move away from idealized renderings of the natural world and move towards mechanical observation using scientific instruments. Over time, scientists found drawbacks to the purely mechanical approach to observation, moving towards another hybrid view that privileged scientific judgement instead. What I would encourage you to take away from a reading of this book is three-fold.

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