



# Objectivity in the Making: Francis Bacon and the Politics of Inquiry

*Professor Julie Robin Solomon*

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How we arrived at a capacity for taking cold, hard looks at the facts of nature -- and whether we ever truly have done so -- are questions that continue to engage both historians of science and students of culture. Historians of modern European intellectual history commonly credit Francis Bacon with laying the groundwork for a mode of study that begins without presuppositions, religious or otherwise, the kind of searching we know as research and long have credited as being "disinterested."

In *Objectivity in the Making*, Julie Robin Solomon shows how "disinterestedness" became a dominant principle of intellectual modernity by examining Bacon's notion of scientific self-distancing against the background of early modern political ideology, socioeconomic behavior, and traditions of learning. Solomon places him between two cultures -- Jacobean monarchical mercantilism and the self-distancing strategies of early-seventeenth-century traders and travelers. She shows that Bacon -- by virtue of his prominent political position within the Jacobean court, familiarity with prevailing commercial practices, and humanistic learning -- made his signal contributions to natural philosophy because of where he stood at a critical juncture.

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