



# **Invention of Journalism Ethics: The Path to Objectivity and Beyond (McGill-Queen's Studies in the History of Ideas)**

*Stephen J. a. Ward*

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In "The Invention of Journalism Ethics" Stephen Ward argues that, given the current emphasis in the news media on interpretation, analysis, and perspective, journalists and the public need a new theory of objectivity - pragmatic objectivity - to enable them to recognize and avoid biased and unbalanced reporting. Ward uses ideas from rhetorical theory to explain the ethical assertions of journalists in various eras, focusing on the changing relationship between journalist and audience. He shows that the objectivity required in journalism is not a set of absolute standards but the same "fallible but reasonable" objectivity used for making decisions in professions and public institutions and must be understood as a long and complex interaction between many social, economic, and ideational factors. Ward also shows that the origin of journalism ethics is much earlier than previously recognized, going back to the partisan English newsbooks of the seventeenth centuries. Concern for objectivity gained momentum in journalism in the late 1800s and Ward discusses the many factors that prompted journalists to construct their own idea of objectivity. His proposed theory of pragmatic objectivity draws on studies in epistemology and philosophy of science to construct a richer, more adequate conception of objectivity to guide journalism practice today.

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