

OBJECTIVITY AS  
(SELF-)CENSORSHIP:  
AGAINST THE  
DOGMATISATION OF  
PROFESSIONAL ETHICS  
IN JOURNALISM

HORST PÖTTKER

Abstract

The task of journalism in a democracy is to create publicness in the sense of unrestricted social communication. A broad and open interpretation of censorship means the creation of barriers to public communication not only by the state, but also by economic, social, and cultural conditions. This essay addresses professional principles of journalism – the separation of editorial and advertising sections, documentation and fiction, and facts and opinion – as means of self-censorship in a democracy. Where are the limits of these professional principles? What are the criteria that distinguish between their legitimate and illegitimate uses? At the end this essay interprets the current tendency to dissolve the journalistic principle of separation.

Horst Pöttker is Professor  
at the Institute of  
Journalism at the  
University of Dortmund;  
e-mail:  
[horst.poettker@udo.edu](mailto:horst.poettker@udo.edu).

## Introduction

Journalism is familiar with a series of principles of separation, whose professional purpose is to clarify the degree of objectivity of a report and, thus, its value to the public: they are the principles of separating editorial (objective information) and advertising sections, documentation (objective information) and fiction, and facts (objective information) and opinion. This essay examines, in particular, the origins of these standards, their purposes, the degree to which they are actually necessary for professional journalism, and do they perhaps contain counterproductive aspects that may be discarded?

In effect, my main thesis is that these principles, unduly expanded and dogmatised, may replace censorship and other barriers to communication – which are externally imposed in dictatorships and other authoritarian systems – with plausible and compelling reasons for journalists regarding self-limitation in democratic societies. These reflections may serve finding practical criteria for journalists concerning the dividing lines between an interpretation and the implementation of principles of separation that are meaningful for professional assignments and their distortion into a counterproductive blocking of communication, which unnecessarily restricts the freedom needed for professional practices.

## Separation of Information and Advertising

The separation of editorial sections from advertising is the oldest principle of separation and the only one to be found in the fixed, written rules of behaviour (press codes) for journalists,<sup>1</sup> whereas the separation of documentation and fiction, like that of news and opinion, is not mentioned. The current trade literature often observes that journalists increasingly violate the expressed dictate to clearly distinguish between reporting and advertising (e.g. Branahl 1997). In fact, the number of complaints about violations of this principle of separation in Germany, for example, clearly declined in the 1990s, from 10.4 percent (1985 to 1989) to only 3.3 percent in 2000 (Pöttker 1999a, 302; Pöttker and Starck 2003, 51). However, this is probably not to be attributed to a decline in violations, but rather to a decline of public and professional sensibilities concerning this professional standard. Instead, it is often interpreted as an expression of a changed self-image among journalists, who have increasingly allowed to be directed less by the ideas of the Enlightenment than by the principles of marketing (e.g. Branahl 1997).

The principle of separation of information and advertising is also obvious in scientific debates over quality control in journalism. Thus, in pleas for journalistic self-control by means of critical media coverage, based on the U.S. American model, advertising for one's own products in the editorial sections is criticised and substantiates the increasing need for control of a profession, whose ethos has been supposedly shaken (cf. Ruß-Mohl 1999). The benevolent consideration of products, which are, as such, unrecognisable as products of the media company – possibly involving a large concern with interests spread out over many branches – is taken just as much to task as the common practice of publications publishing positive information about their own economic development, their journalistic intentions, or their personnel in a prominent, editorial space, where self-references are thoroughly recognisable by the public. Criticism rarely differentiates between expressed self-disclosure and subtle, surreptitious advertising.

Since when has the principle of separating information and advertising belonged to the journalistic self-image? For instance, a newspaper from the second half of the eighteenth century, that is, from the epoch of the Enlightenment, already carried paid advertisements (called "Avertisements") for commercial goods. They are found at the end of each edition, in fact, divided from the editorial matter by a distinct horizontal line. The latter indicates an already pronounced consciousness that advertising – which serves the interests of a third party and is paid and answered for by that third party – is supposed to be set apart from the information sections of the newspaper for which the paper itself is responsible. But the editorial part of the same newspaper contains a text designated by today's practice as an editorial on its own behalf: "We have also abstained from the smallest profit; we also abstain from all glory: only not from the sweet sensation in the land whose prince is such an outstanding man to found and support as much good as is possible in this way."<sup>2</sup> A clear case of self-adulation that could hardly be lost on its readership.

Journalists only later lost their lack of inhibition when, in the nineteenth century, commenting on one's own product, about its objectives, or about the circumstances of its origins, met with increasing disapproval. Such a practice would have required a confession of subjectivity, incompatible with the profession's increasing claims of objectivity. With the exception of the reportage (cf. Pöttker 2000, 40f.), there is no place for a first-person approach in genres that became journalistic standards in the second half of the nineteenth century. It is just as alien to the nature of news (cf. Kurz et al. 2000, 217-238) that has characterised the face of Western journalism since then, even when the objective style of news reporting, which bears Anglo-Saxon features, seems to be getting softer.

The purpose of the basic principle of separating information and advertising is obvious: the reasons for a report should become recognisable to the public. Is this only a professional interest to make known generally what the individual should know about coping with his life, or what must become the topic of a social discourse? Or is it (also) a different interest that moves readers towards the purchase of certain products, towards the election of a certain party, or towards specific behaviours desired by the communicator or his bosses?

This is one sense in which the spirit of the Enlightenment truly prevails when we think of Kant, who suggests, "Enlightenment is man's release from his self-incurred tutelage. Tutelage is man's inability to make use of his understanding without direction from another" (Kant 1963, 1). The inability to avail oneself independently of one's own understanding does not have to be always and completely self-incurred, but can also be due to a lack of knowledge withheld by others. For example, a piece of information which seems to be indebted solely to a general, journalistic interest in the creation of a public discourse can be traced, in reality, to motives for influencing the public in the service of a special, non-journalistic interest.

The principle of separating information and advertising has yet another side contrary to the spirit of the Enlightenment: it may become a taboo, which forbids writing about oneself and one's own work. For instance, at the beginning of the 1970s, a critic of the West German press wrote, "Journalists have... a formula... that sounds like modesty and drapes itself as classical tradition: he who writes for others does not write about himself.... Newspapers, which constitute the public sphere, publish nothing about the circumstances under which they are produced. The mechanics of the interests remain largely unknown" (Müller 1973, 11).<sup>3</sup>

The professional self-restriction of journalists, thus, hinders the creation of a public discourse about structural questions regarding the media. But such public discourse would be necessary for an evolving, optimal social regulation of media development. In their work journalists are dependent on media concerns and their economic success. Media concerns and economic success are, in turn, dependent on the public and its way of dealing with media. To be able to discern the possibilities of influence that derive from it, the public, or individual recipients, would have to understand the dependence of the media and of journalism on them (cf. Pöttker 1999b).

How can such transparency emerge? Probably less through critical analyses of the culture industry, which at best reach intellectuals, than, ironically, through self-promotion, which media concerns happily place directly in the editorial sections (“editorial marketing”). Because a broad audience, who is made to understand – possibly also only subconsciously – how very keen a newspaper is on getting paid subscriptions, will also learn to understand itself as a determining factor in media development and journalistic work. Accordingly, it would be counterproductive for professional journalistic ethics to prevent newspapers from publicising (as advertising) their economic or publishing successes. Here and elsewhere the spirit of the Enlightenment may prevail in a way different from what its programmatic champions assume, namely as unintentional, secondary consequences of behaviours to which its subjects ascribe an almost contradictory meaning.

Consequently, a very wide-reaching, quasi-ethical interpretation of the principle of separation seems in need of an overhaul. Editorial marketing in the form of self-promotion, which is mostly recognisable as such, must not be excluded.

Self-promotion, which is by its very nature scarcely able to conceal itself, can be thoroughly informative, because it allows latent connections of media production to become visible. Indeed, it is the journalistic location at which structures of media production reveal themselves. Therefore, it does not matter whether they are to be found below the line in the advertising section as declared house announcements, or – like in the Enlightenment epoch – above the line in the editorial sections.

If the principle of separation of editorial and advertising sections is also extended to self-promotion, which is recognisable to the public as such, it becomes a barrier to communication and further hinders casual insights of the public into the structures of media production. In the idol worship of objectivity, the principle becomes an ideologically loaded and apparently professional means of self-censorship.

## Separation of Information and Fiction

We seem to be experiencing today a cautious re-literarisation of journalism. The professional rule that non-fiction media content, bound by the quality standard of accuracy, may not be combined with fiction, is understood by some journalists as being not quite as natural as few years ago. Consequently, a distinction from “literature” as a decisive criterion becomes shaky.

This development occurred first and most intensely in journalistic film and television productions. While a genre like the “docudrama,” which consciously joins fact and fiction, has arisen in the area of documentary production, the authors of

feature films also make journalistic claims for their scripts. On the film and television screen, breaking the principle of separating fiction and non-fiction is occasionally raised almost to the level of programming. Examples include Guido Knopp's film series on Germany's National Socialist past aired by ZDF (Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen/Second German Television) in the 1990s.<sup>4</sup>

It is no wonder that some keepers of the Grail of the journalistic profession have fired heavy polemic artillery salvos against the series. For instance, the co-publisher of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ), Frank Schirrmacher observed, "Everything is being mixed together now, not only fiction and documentation . . . . The ZDF calls this 'scenic quotation.' . . . Fictionalisation is contagious. It is spreading to historical material. Whoever mixes genres creates mutants. The film minute in which twenty seconds of historical film material is shown and twenty of Mengele's crimes are recreated makes a video clip of history. One does not know what is more unsettling. The thoughtlessness of the procedure or the calculation that the crimes of the Third Reich require dramatic styling in order to attract attention."<sup>5</sup>

Is the principle of separating fact and fiction actually constitutive of the journalistic profession, and has it been there from the beginning? Again, there are historical precedents. For instance, Daniel Defoe – the author of *Robinson Crusoe* – is an eighteenth century, world-famous author of novels, who was simultaneously the editor of a political newspaper with a remarkable professional self-image as a journalist. He generously spiced the factual report of the adventure of a sailor, Alexander Selkirk, who had been marooned on a lonely Pacific island, with fictional touches to lure the reading public.

It is even more revealing for our purposes, however, that the journalist Defoe was intensely engaged against false news (cf. Pöttker 1998), while finding nothing wrong with stressing the supposedly factual accuracy of his novel (cf. Kalb 1985, 38). He claimed journalistic accuracy for a largely fictional text. In other words, journalists of the Enlightenment did not seem to use the criterion of verifiable factuality – well known to them – to differentiate journalism from literature.

The journalistic profession was not yet separated from the literary work by the criterion of factuality throughout the Enlightenment. Therefore, the time since the 1920s was designated, not without reason, as the period of "literary journalism" (cf. Baumert 1928, 35-46). For instance, not only are the reports on parliament from the Church of St. Paul, as late as 1848, on the front pages of the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* [New Rhine Newspaper] aesthetically stylised to the point of fictionality by its political editors, Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx, but also (below the fold) the satires of its feature editor, Georg Weerth, are imaginatively depicting the worries that haunt the fictitious merchant Preiß in his dark branch office in the face of the revolutionary changes out outside (cf. Pöttker 2001, 39-43). The view that the literary/fictional does not belong in journalism was accepted, at the earliest, in the second half of the nineteenth century, and practiced not until the twentieth century.

The principle of separating fact and fiction means – similarly to the separation of information and advertising – that the public is supposed to recognise the status of communication contents. It is about an additional piece of information that prevents the public from ascribing the value of unprocessed sensory perception to reports that derive from the imaginative activities of communicators or, reversely, the perception of reality becomes merely a result of imaginative activities.

Beyond its positive meaning, this principle of separation also raises certain problems. As a criterion of distinction, which restricts fiction for journalists, two counterproductive effects appear. First, this limitation collides with the duty to comprehensive reporting. Obviously, there are thematic zones that are thoroughly in need of publicity, but which close themselves (for the most part) to journalistic research and are (almost) only accessible to the imagination. With their help the perception of facts at the edges of these zones may be broadened as a plausible understanding of meaning. Three examples are:

- Bureaucratic organisations that operate according to the principle of confidentiality although decisions of society-wide significance are made by them;
- Conscious or subconscious motives of protagonists, all subjective conditions and events that are, in principle, inaccessible to sensory perception and that only allow themselves to be revealed through their expressions in the form of behaviours; and finally,
- the past, which is only tangible in the form of historical documents and other traces of behaviour, although handing down always reveals gaps.

These three factors, which speak for the permissibility of fictional (re)construction in journalism may interact. One example is the journalistic task of creating a public discourse regarding Nazi crimes. The fragmentary nature of the records, the essential – but in terms of news – incommunicable comprehension of the perpetrators' motivations (which must not be mistaken for an approving understanding of them!), and the perpetrators' interest-driven discretion, make clear that journalism cannot be satisfied with the reproduction of safe, individual facts, but must also make use of reconstructive and interpretive fantasy.

The second counterproductive effect of limiting journalism to sober facts is the clash with the goal of every public profession, namely to reach the largest and most heterogeneous audience. Information becomes attractive to majorities when potential recipients are able to recognise a connection between it and their own daily life. For that to happen, it becomes necessary to put oneself in the protagonists' position of a reported event and their motives, including their emotional components: the result is a comprehensibility of the subjective sense of acting that does not approve of, or at least does not encourage, a naked reproduction of facts that result from actions. Journalists are able to level the path of information, which must, of course, be true at its core to the public through emotionalising fiction.

If the separation of documentation and fiction becomes a justification for journalists to refrain from the use of interpretive fantasy and emotional aestheticisation, however, this principle of separation becomes another barrier that excludes important circumstances and problems from public communication by means of journalistic self-censorship. Therefore, the present re-literarisation of journalism also in the quality press is a welcome sign.

For example, fictional texts may occasionally be found on the front page of the respected German weekly newspaper, *Die Zeit*; they would have been unthinkable twenty years ago. This example also shows the benefits of the principle of a separation of facts and what may not be relinquished through a reform. For instance, in 1998 a fictional letter from chancellor candidate Gerhard Schröder to "dear *Zeit* readers," appeared on the front page of *Die Zeit*, in which the politician campaigned for votes in a chatty tone.<sup>6</sup> Since the text was only signed by its ficti-

tious sender and not by its actual author, many readers obviously took it for real. In any case, the editors considered it necessary in the following issue to provide a clarification, which pointed to the satirical character of the article and carefully added that a real campaign letter from a chancellor candidate would not have found its place in the news and editorial sections.<sup>7</sup>

In this case a necessary professional standard was damaged, even when the separation of information and fiction is abandoned. Also, within a type of journalism reopened to a literary component, facts and fictions, or rather various degrees of fictionalisation and aestheticisation should be recognisable to recipients, who must know about a piece of information.

*Die Zeit*, by the way, learned quickly. The next front-page fiction was a conversation between Gerhard Schröder and his predecessor, Helmut Kohl, at night, and in the garden of the chancellery; it was signed by the real author. Both the external designation and the content of this text left no doubt that this was a matter of satire.<sup>8</sup> In other quality newspapers as well, the designation of fictional texts is not always clear. The *FAZ*, for instance, attributed quotations from Thomas Mann's novella, "Mario and the Magician," to Gerhard Schröder to characterise the federal chancellor's critical opinions of Italy and Italians, and, thus, reached the limits of legitimacy. The initial identification of these quotes occurred in the very last paragraph without being set off from the continuous text; without finishing the article a reader could have gained the impression of just having read Schröder's own remarks.<sup>9</sup>

## Separation of Information and Opinion

The journalistic principle that information and opinion, or news and commentary are to be strictly separated is, like all imperatives of professional ethics, itself a value judgment; it is a subjective opinion, not a factual statement, whose validity may be tested empirically. Since this opinion is extremely widespread – the idea that good journalism is to be recognised above all by a separation of news and opinion – this principle of separation seemingly constitutes the essence of the profession; it has nearly assumed the character of dogma. The *FAZ* especially, which likes to see itself as the flagship of German quality journalism, demonstrates the importance of this principle whilst supposedly following it strictly and with an obtrusiveness that arouses scepticism.

A glance through the newspaper landscape teaches that equating a separation of information and opinion with journalistic quality is by no means perfectly natural. For instance, the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (*NZZ*) belongs indisputably to the leading German-language quality newspapers, especially in terms of breadth and competence in its foreign correspondence. It may even be the one and only world-class daily German language newspaper. Despite its outstanding quality, the *NZZ* has never raised the particular claim of separating information and opinion. This would also be difficult, because the genre with which its calibre stands and falls is the extended report by its correspondents. In these reports detailed pieces of factual information and their open assessment by *NZZ* correspondents appear immediately adjacent to one another; news and (mostly conservative) opinion run through, in, and over one another without editors or readers taking offence.

Journalists are allowed to express an opinion as the result of a process of freeing the press from the feudal and absolutist censorship that had persisted from the

seventeenth until well into the nineteenth century. As long as they were overseen by their sovereigns, journalists had to limit themselves to the bare facts and were, at best, able to take refuge in literary fiction – like Defoe in *Robinson Crusoe* or Swift in *Gulliver's Travels* – when they wanted publicise their politically or socially critical views. Although prohibiting opinions could not be maintained totally for epistemological reasons (cf. Adrians 1999), it was the human right to freedom of *opinion*, which was first pushed through by the Enlightenment, and the bourgeois/democratic revolutions, that gave journalists the expressly-granted possibility of expressing and publicly spreading without limits their political, religious, or philosophical views.

The later democratic movements spread through a nation, the later their journalists made use of this right. Thus, the fierce journalistic controversies in German, interest-driven journalism during the second half of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century, reflect a demand that had built up in Germany, because censorship had lasted longer there than in other Western democracies.

In Anglo-Saxon countries, where successful democratic revolutions had already taken place in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, modern journalism developed significantly earlier. In the United States, the political opinion press was – with the rise of the commercial “penny press” after 1835 – edged out by a news journalism, which emphasises even today the accuracy of transmitting facts (objectivity norm) and the separation of news and commentary (cf. Mindich 1998).

It is, nevertheless, a misunderstanding to see a contradiction between the self-image of journalists as social critics and investigators, and the Anglo-Saxon orientation on facts. The concept of the “Fourth Estate” is originally an Anglo-Saxon term (cf. Altschull 1989, 228-237; Hardt, 1998, 195-197). It is not the alternative “watchdog position *or* objective reporting” that is suggested by this tradition, however; rather, many American journalists understand their professional work as safeguarding a watchdog position conferred on them by society *through* objective reporting; that is, insofar as they thoroughly research social and political abuses and report true to the facts.

After 1945 these Anglo-Saxon standards were grafted onto German journalism with its other traditions – at first only outdated in comparison to Western development, but then excessively exaggerated and perverted during the Nazi regime. Allied re-education propagated a (self-)limitation – supposedly to be equated with professionalism – to the factual, or the newsworthy. Compared to the liberal Anglo-Saxon tradition, this development was a more aggravated devaluation of the journalistic expression of opinion, because it countered the traditional German inclination to express convictions.

Consequently, this principle of separation was advanced – and is partly still advanced – in the Federal Republic of Germany as the professional duty of journalists to a neutral and opinion-free recounting of facts in spite of a guaranteed media plurality with its potential of diverse voices. The restrictive extension of the objectivity rule for news departments to disallowing subjectivity for the profession became, for example, quite clear during the 1970s. At that time public broadcasting came under pressure to adhere to political and social expectations to preserve expressions of inner plurality, not only in its overall programming, but also in individual episodes. The meticulous fulfilment of this demand was habitually



demonstrated by a clock, visible to television viewers, that allotted equal speaking time to representatives of various political parties.

The underlying expansion and ideologisation of the professional norm, also in communication studies during the 1970s, to separate news and commentary (cf. Schönbach 1977) culminated in prohibiting opinions by journalists and almost recalls conditions under pre-bourgeois censorship. Thus, Hans Wagner's Munich School, for instance, characterises the essence of journalism as the duty to impartiality limited to the transfer of communication, that is, to reports from third parties. The goal "to present certain points of view and convictions as correct and to convince others of it" (Wagner 1998, 106<sup>10</sup>) is fundamentally denied to the journalist (in contrast to the publicist from whom he is to be strictly differentiated).

The separation of news and opinion also has the purpose of making the status of a report recognisable to the public; it is, again, a matter of respect for the maturity of the reader, listener, or viewer.

There remains the question of a dark side and a need for reform. Answers arise from the insight that a completely values-free recounting of facts, without a subjective admixture, is impossible. After all, subjectivity is already lodged in the selection of the recounted facts and, in principle, cannot be avoided, since it is not always recognisable and controllable, even for journalists. For instance, a war reporter who only reports the losses of the opposing army may recount this number completely correctly and soberly, and yet the one-sided selection of what he reports and what he leaves out contains a strong propagandistic bias.

Obviously the principle of separating news and commentary is also ambivalent. On the one hand, it is productive, because it encourages accuracy and completeness on the news side just as it can liberate the courage to true and open positions on the commentary page – as long as it is not ideologised to prohibit opinions. On the other hand, a counterproductive effect may also be recognised, because this principle of separation, particularly when it is represented with ethically principled emphasis, can feed the illusion of subjectivity-free news. Wrongly assumed, it creates the danger of objectifying hidden value judgments, which will no longer be recognised as such and achieve an undue status of statements of fact (cf. Geiger 1953). The way in which a National Socialist ideology of race claimed credibility by pursuing scientifically exact skull measurements may stand as an example of the dangers of inappropriate objectification rather than – as the Allied re-education assumed – as too much open subjectivity.

In the face of its ambivalence, it appears to be just as legitimate for journalism to orient itself by this principle of separation, as it is to ignore it. If the *NZZ* combines accurate information with recognisable opinion, it is thoroughly justifiable because, even if there were any doubts, the position from which recounted facts are selected still reveals itself to the reader. Respect for the maturity of the public may also be expressed in this fashion. But it is equally justifiable if the *FAZ* held to this principle of separation as long as the newspaper truly attempts to adhere to it without merely using it to make interest-bound judgments and express positions more convincingly with the help of a factual whitewash.

Therefore, this principle of separation also should not be given up, but freed from its restrictive dogmatisation. The goal is to accomplish a recanting of the ideas that the separation of information and opinion suggests the illegitimacy of jour-

nalistic subjectivity and that journalists in their professional roles must essentially suppress their political, religious, or aesthetic views and refrain from expressing evaluations and judgments that stem from them. Also, journalists in their professional activities are entitled to the universal right of expression of opinions, and safeguarding this right under the conditions of media diversity fulfils the function of informing the public about possible assessments of current events.

In addition, it is a matter of rescinding the emphatic pressure under which the separation of information and opinion is demanded of all journalists. The conscious abandonment of this norm of separation, as it is practiced by a global newspaper, like the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, creates a justifiable position that deserves a place in professional journalism, if professional ethics and the duty to objectivity are not to assume the character of self-censorship.

## Concluding Remarks

The separation of information from advertising, aesthetic fiction, and opinion are three principles of separation that respect the public in that they are supposed to enable it to form its own judgment about the value of information by providing clarifications about background interests and the reality-content of journalistic reports. Consequently, the principles of separation actually represent the spirit of the Enlightenment with which they are often equated.

A closer look, of course, reveals the questionable nature of the equation. Over-extension and dogmatisation can turn the principles of separation into *communication barriers* that exclude certain themes and means of exchange from the potential public discourse. For instance, if the taboo about expressing self-interests arises from a separation of information and advertising that contributes to obscuring media events and if the exclusion of literary fantasies from journalism arises from the separation of information and fiction, then many issues beyond bare facts that cannot be investigated are excluded from the social discourse. Also, the separation of information and opinion as justification for why journalists must suppress expressions of their subjective views curtails not only a hard-won human right, but also excludes from public debate events that are difficult to research as facts as well as the driving forces of journalistic activity itself.

Rigidly and extensively applied, these principles of separation could take the place of censorship in democracies.

It is no accident that the aspect of the principles of separation, which handicaps communication, took its shape in a particular developmental phase of modern society. At that time, a formerly revolutionary bourgeoisie conquered the government and then, for its part, set about rejecting demands for emancipation by workers, women, and youths. In the nineteenth century emerged not only professional rules of news journalism with their insistence on objectivity and its separation from advertising, literature, and (in the Anglo-Saxon countries) political propaganda, but also the separation of a serious, rational, and masculine sphere from a playful, emotional, feminine one in the social division of work. It was accompanied by the separation of a serious and informative elite culture from popular culture, for example, of serious and light music. In this view, the principles of separation in their ideologised form are instruments of a bourgeois elite still used to informally defend its privileges in the journalism of democratically constituted societies.

At the end of the second millennium, the hierarchisation of culture is softening even in Germany, the fortress of the educated classes (*Bildungsbürgertum*). Economic development of capitalism, which is extending and advancing its markets (globalisation), demands a removal of culturally determined sales barriers with consequences especially for the media market, which not only wants to sell its own products, but fulfils important functions for the marketing of other products.

In any case, for example, the present increase in clearly recognisable self-promotion of the media does not mean the end of professional journalism if one understands by professionalism less a rigid adherence to rules and more a sense of social responsibility. Perhaps the principles of separation will return to what they once were before their ideologisation: an expression of respect for the public, which may be credited with more competence to differentiate and, therefore, be trusted with more authentic information, not purged of subjectivity, than the keepers of the Grail of an alleged objectivity expect.

Except that in contrast to the Enlightenment epoch, during the transition to the third millennium it becomes not a question of a small, property-owning and educated part of the public, but of the *whole* public.<sup>11</sup>

## Notes:

1. Section 7 of the Guidelines for journalistic work as recommended by the German Press Council says, for example: "The responsibility of the Press towards the public requires that editorial publications are not influenced by the private or business interests of third parties or by the personal commercial interests of journalists. Publishers and editors must reject any attempts of this nature and make a clear distinction between editorial texts and commercial content." Available at [http://www.presserat.de/site/service/lang\\_english/kodex/engkod5.html](http://www.presserat.de/site/service/lang_english/kodex/engkod5.html).
2. *Homburgisches Wochenblatt für den Bürger und Landmann*, January 22, 1789. Translated by Chris Long.
3. Translated by Chris Long.
4. For example, *Hitlers Helfer (Hitler's Hitmen)*, the accompanying book to the series. cf. Knopp, Guido. 1996. *Hitlers Helfer*. Munich: Bertelsmann; Knopp, Guido. 2002. *Hitler's Hitmen*. Stroud: Sutton.
5. Translated by Chris Long.
6. *Die Zeit*, "Anstelle einer Regierungserklärung", July 16, 1998.
7. *Die Zeit*, "Betr.: Bordeaux", July 23, 1998.
8. *Die Zeit*, "Spätnachts, im Park des Kanzleramts", December 3, 1998.
9. *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, "Erfreuliche Menschen. Schröders Italiener: Ein tragisches Reiseerlebnis", July 11, 2003.
10. Translated by Chris Long.
11. The author wishes to thank Chris Long for her help in translating this essay.

## References:

- Adrians, Frauke. 1999. *Journalismus im 30jährigen Krieg. Kommentierung und "Parteylichkeit" in Zeitungen des 17. Jahrhunderts*. Konstanz: UVK Medien.
- Altschull, J. Herbert. 1989. *Agenten der Macht. Die Welt der Nachrichtenmedien – eine kritische Studie*. Konstanz: Universitätsverlag.
- Baumert, Dieter Paul. 1928. *Die Entstehung des deutschen Journalismus. Eine sozialgeschichtliche Studie*. München/Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot.

- Branahl, Udo. 1997. Berichterstattung und Wirtschaftswerbung. Änderung im journalistischen Selbstverständnis. In M. Machill (ed.), *Journalistische Kultur. Rahmenbedingungen im internationalen Vergleich*, 71-80. Opladen/Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag.
- Hardt, Hanno. 1998. *Interactions. Critical Studies in Communication, Media, and Journalism*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Hickthier, Knut. 1979. Fiktion und Fakt. Das Dokumentarspiel und seine Entwicklung bei ZDF und ARD. In H. Kreuzer and K. Prümm (ed.), *Fernsehsendungen und ihre Formen. Typologie, Geschichte und Kritik des Programms in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, 53-70. Stuttgart: Phillip Reclam jun.
- Kalb, Gertrud. 1985. *Daniel Defoe*. Heidelberg: Metzler.
- Kant, Immanuel. 1963. What is Enlightenment? In L. W. Beck (ed. and trans.), *On History*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company.
- Kurz, Josef and others. 2000. *Stilistik für Journalisten*. Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag.
- Mindich, David T. Z. 1998. *Just the Facts. How "Objectivity" Came to Define American Journalism*. New York: NYU Press.
- Müller, Hans-Dieter. 1973. Die Arbeitswelt – kein Thema für die Presse? In E. Spoo (ed.), *Die Tabus der bundesdeutschen Presse*, 11-19. Munich: Hanser.
- Pöttker, Horst. 1998. Von Nutzen und Grenze der Medienfreiheit. Daniel Defoe und die Anfänge eines Ethos der Öffentlichkeitsberufe. In W. Wunden (ed.), *Freiheit und Medien. Beiträge zur Medienethik, Vol. 4*, 221-225. Frankfurt a.M.: GEP
- Pöttker, Horst. 1999a. Berufsethik für Journalisten? Professionelle Trennungsgrundsätze auf dem Prüfstand. In A. Holderegger (ed.), *Kommunikations- und Medienethik. Interdisziplinäre Perspektiven*, 299-327. Freiburg i.Ue: Universitätsverlag.
- Pöttker, Horst. 1999b. Öffentlichkeit als Folgentransparenz. Über ein Regulierungsproblem der modernen Gesellschaft und das Lösungspotential des Journalismus. In K. Imhof, O. Jarren and R. Blum (eds.), *Steuerungs- und Regelungsprobleme in der Informationsgesellschaft*, 232-246. Opladen/Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag.
- Pöttker, Horst. 2000. Heines Tageberichte für die *Allgemeine Zeitung*. Ein Beitrag zu Geschichte und Bestimmung der Reportage. In O. Jarren, G. Kopper and G. Toepser-Ziegert (eds.), *Zeitung – Medium mit Vergangenheit und Zukunft. Eine Bestandaufnahme. Festschrift aus Anlaß des 60. Geburtstages von Hans Bohrmann*, 27-46. Munich: K.G. Saur.
- Pöttker, Horst. 2001. Beschleunigung und Verlangsamung als Faktoren historischer Wahrnehmung. Die Publizistik der März-Revolution aus den Perspektiven von 1968 und 1998. *Zeitschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Linguistik (LiLi)* 31, 123, 32-45.
- Pöttker, Horst and Kenneth Starck. 2003. Criss-Crossing Perspectives: Contrasting Models of Press Self-regulation in Germany and the United States. *Journalism Studies* 4, 1, 47-64.
- Ruß-Mohl, Stefan. 1999. (Selbst-)Steuerung des Mediensystems durch Medienjournalismus und Medien-PR. In K. Imhof, O. Jarren, and R. Blum (eds.), *Steuerungs- und Regelungsprobleme in der Informationsgesellschaft*, 197-199. Opladen/Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag.
- Schirmacher, Frank. 1998. Hitler, nach Knopp. Enthusiasmus des Bösen. Die neue Ästhetik des ZDF. *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, April 18, 1998.
- Schönbach, Klaus. 1977. *Trennung von Nachricht und Meinung. Empirische Untersuchung eines journalistischen Qualitätskriteriums*. Freiburg i.Br./Munich: Karl Alber.
- Wagner, Hans. 1998. Das Unwandelbare im Journalismus. In W. Duchkowsch and others (eds.), *Journalismus als Kultur. Analysen und Essays. Festschrift für Wolfgang R. Langenbacher*, 95-111. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag.