

## Journalism in the Academy, a MacIntyeane account of the institutions and practices of journalism education in England

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# JOURNALISM IN THE ACADEMY, A MACINTYEAN ACCOUNT OF THE INSTITUTIONS AND PRACTICES OF JOURNALISM EDUCATION IN ENGLAND

PERIODISMO EN EL MUNDO ACADÉMICO, UNA PERSPECTIVA MACINTYRIANA DE LAS INSTITUCIONES Y LAS PRÁCTICAS EN LA FORMACIÓN PERIODÍSTICA EN INGLATERRA

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## Abstract

This paper to considers some of the systematic problems and constraints faced by academics teaching and researching in the field of journalism and journalism studies. To do this, I draw on MacIntyre's philosophical concept of practice, applying it to the practice of journalism and the practice of academia, which I argue here have many commonalities. This conceptualisation of the practical activities of journalists and academics also takes account of their factual dependence on institutions. MacIntyre argues that although institutions should be considered to be necessary, in bureaucratic capitalist social systems they tend to pursue external goods at the cost of the goods internal to the practice. Practices thus become corrupted as institutions orient them to the pursuit of external goods. I argue that both journalists and academics are subject to similar processes of institutional domination, or colonisation, and that because of this, the capacity study, teach, and then practice a critical journalism adequate to a properly democratic community is stymied. The most significant problem on this analysis is that processes of colonisation are not discrete, they are systematic, extensive and commonly experienced. Consequently it is inadequate to consider discrete forms of resistance to these problems and constraints. Instead, I argue, we must consider common and collective forms of resistance.

## Resumen

*Este artículo considera algunos de los problemas y las limitaciones sistemáticas a las que se enfrentan los académicos que enseñan e investigan en el área del periodismo y de los estudios de comunicación. Para ello, me baso en el concepto filosófico de MacIntyre de práctica, y lo aplico a la práctica en el periodismo y en la academia, donde argumento que hay similitudes. Esta forma de conceptualizar las actividades prácticas de los periodistas y los académicos también tiene en cuenta su dependencia de las instituciones. MacIntyre argumenta que, aunque las instituciones son necesarias, en los sistemas sociales capitalistas burocráticos tienden a perseguir bienes externos*

*al coste de los bienes internos a una práctica. Así, las prácticas se corrompen en la medida que las instituciones las orientan hacia los bienes externos a las mismas. Defiendo que tanto los periodistas como los académicos están sujetos a procesos similares de dominación o colonización y que, por estos motivos, la capacidad de estudiar, enseñar y después, practicar un periodismo crítico adecuado a una comunidad verdaderamente democrática queda en entredicho. El problema más significativo de este análisis es que los procesos de colonización no tienen límites concretos, son sistemáticos, amplios y vividos como una experiencia común. Consecuentemente, no resulta apropiado considerar formas de resistencia específicamente delimitadas ante estos problemas. En cambio, argumento que debemos considerar formas comunes y colectivas de resistencia.*

### **Keywords**

Journalism education, MacIntyre, Practices, Democracy, Habermas, Colonisation

### **Palabras Clave**

*Formación en Periodismo, McIntyre, Prácticas, Democracia, Habermas, Colonización*

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## **1. Introduction**

**W**hen we consider the position of journalism in society, we would do well to think of it in the first instance as a social phenomenon that takes place like any other, that is, it takes place within institutions, framed by and organised within an institutional order dominated by the state. However, here I propose that we also consider journalism and academic work as communicative *practices* that should serve publics of citizens, and that as *institutionalised* practices

framed by the state they share a number of common problems and constraints posed by those institutions. The growth of university provision in journalism and related areas presents the opportunity for both journalists and academics to better understand the communicative constraints under which both journalistic and academic practices take place, and the degree to which they can pursue goods internal to those practices.

The divide between how journalists understand their practice and how scholarly research describes it has long been a significant issue (for a pertinent account of this, see Rosen, 1999). A substantial body of scholarly research into journalism has drawn attention to the constraints that journalists face, whether related to issues of ownership (Herman and McChesney, 1997), the routinisation of production (Allan, 2004), the interface with the hierarchically ordered state (Hall et. al., 1978), the broader mode of production (Wayne, 2003), linguistic or discursive framing (Fairclough, 1995; Fowler, 1991) and so on. When such findings are put to journalists, they are often sceptically received, considered to be based on a lack of understanding of journalism and therefore inaccurate, and are usually understood as quite personal attacks on the dedication of individual journalists to their *craft*. Certainly, whether recognised or not, the *background* constraints faced by journalists are rarely compared to those faced by academics.

When we understand that academics face similar constraints as journalists (and together are organised by the sometimes visible, sometimes invisible hand of the state), we can begin to understand that the call for academics to inform better practice among journalists, especially in the provision of journalism education in the university sector, can be inadequate. This is especially problematic when practices are understood in terms of the pursuit of external goods (such as market, customer satisfaction, income) as opposed to their internal goods and the goods of the communities they serves, its role as a facilitator of democracy can easily fade from view. To this end, I use the term *journalism* as a mode of public communication mediating citizens, groups, their political communities and the facilitating democracy. This latter concept is understood not as the extension of consumer choice but as the ability of people to govern themselves as a public, to be able to make and implement decisions about how to order the goods they pursue as individuals and collectively. Accordingly, journalism in the sense used here should furnish people with knowledge about important issues that enable or prevent them from pursuing goods. The university ought to perform a similar role, and insofar as journalism is taught within, it should be taught with such goals at the forefront.

To explain the practices and institutional constraints on journalism and academia, I draw on Jürgen Habermas's colonisation of the lifeworld thesis, but

note that there are shortcomings in this theory. To address these shortcomings I draw on Alasdair MacIntyre's (1981) distinction between practices and institutions, an exercise whose legitimacy is inferred by a key MacIntyre scholar who claims that there is a clear resonance between Habermas's lifeworld and system dichotomy and MacIntyre's distinction between practices and institutions, with the qualification that Habermas's basis for resistance to instrumental rationality solely in communication is insufficient (Knight, 1998, p. 293). On the understanding that academics and journalists both pursue communicative practices that are embedded in institutions, we can begin to understand how the systemic constraints to which academics and journalists are subject present some significant challenges for the study of journalism and the inculcation of critical practices of journalism for the public sphere.

Moreover, I note that whilst a number of accounts of journalism education describe some of the institutional constraints under which academics work (especially Reese and Cohen, 2000, p. 218), most do not take full account of the role of the state or the possibility of organised, collective responses to the problems facing journalism and academia (e.g. Reese and Cohen, 2000; MacDonald, 2006; Deuze, 2006). Here I agree with Wayne's (2003, chapter 5) argument that the former omission reflects a more general neglect in media studies, wherein the state is understood as either a source of information for journalists or a policy-maker, rather than an institution whose main functions are the generation of legitimation, and the setting up of conditions for capital accumulation domestically and internationally, to organise production and to respond to the "numerous imperatives of the economic system" (Habermas, 1976, p. 34). It is through these latter functions that we can best understand the pernicious effects of the bureaucratic capitalist state on journalism and academia, and the ability of universities to teach a form of critical journalism that can support democratic communities.

Due to the nature and depth of these systemic constraints, the oft-cited imperative to teach critically turns out to be insufficient. Accordingly I suggest that critical practice in public-facing and communicatively structured teaching and learning be supplemented by common, collective challenges to the basis and manifestations of colonisation, grounded in a concept of practice.

## 2. Habermas's Theory and MacIntyre's Supplementation

Jürgen Habermas has become an increasingly important figure in scholarly attempts to explain the roles and responsibilities of journalists. However, most such references focus on his (1989) account of the public sphere, even then often without appreciating that his was a critique of an *ideological*

“category of bourgeois society”, rather than an affirmation of a specific and historically contextual phenomenon. The problem with such a focus is that it does not take full account of the development of his thought since, nor the dialectical interplay of lifeworld and system, explicated through the concept of colonisation.

The importance of Habermas’s theory of colonisation consists in its capacity to explain a general process of subsumption of practices and informal institutions under the instrumental logic of *subsystems*, most notably the capitalist economy and the bureaucratic state. Colonisation occurs when instrumental rationality “surges beyond the bounds of the economy and state into other, communicatively structured areas of life and achieves dominance there at the expense of moral-practical and aesthetic-practical rationality” (Habermas, 1987, p. 304). The colonisation of the lifeworld by the subsystems does not go so far as to destroy the lifeworld and its communicative resources, but disempowers it, damaging its capacity to coordinate action. That is, the values directing action and assigning worth come to reflect those of purely instrumental reason, whether this be the profit-motive, administrative efficiency or both. Subsequently, “the money medium replaces linguistic communication in certain situations” so that the money medium becomes a “substitute for special functions of language” (Habermas, 1987, pp. 262-3). It is through this colonisation that roles and social relations are constructed, turning people into employees, customers and clients, who are subject to rules of action that are driven by the needs of the economic system and the state rather than the lifeworld. As Habermas (1987, p. 325) explains, “to the degree that the economic subsystem subjects the life-forms of private households and the life conduct of consumers and employees to its imperatives, consumerism and possessive individualism, motives of performance and competition gain the force to shape behavior”.

Despite the explanatory power of Habermas’s colonisation thesis, there is a significant gap in his work. Although the lifeworld is seen as the major source of resistance to colonisation (Habermas, 1987, pp. 391-396; 1989a, pp. 66-67; 1996, pp. 373), beyond considering largely left-wing social movements and the latent potential of communicative action, he does not explain how specific practices might act as foundations for resistance. This problem stems from his strong distinction between labour and interaction – the first being associated purely with instrumental action and the latter solely with communicative action. Such a strong dichotomisation puts labour beyond ethical hope, disabling normative claims over the treatment and organisation of labour. To correct this, I suggest that we consider the Macintyrean concept of a social practice as, in effect, communicative labour.

The concept of social practices has been developed by MacIntyre as part of his Aristotelian project to explain the capacity of human beings to act in accord with their nature as social, dependent rational animals oriented to commonly agreed rationally ordered ends. A practice is a

coherent and complex form of socially established co-operative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realised in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended (MacIntyre, 1981: 187).

Practices cannot be understood as deriving from compulsion, managers or money, but as embodying historically developed standards of excellence, serving the practice, the product and the community in which it takes place. For MacIntyre, this historical grounding of a practice serves to enable the practitioner to understand its purpose, and to enable newcomers to learn it through knowing it as a “tradition”. The concept of tradition in this sense is not conservative, but obliges one to reflect on the past and have a concern for the future of the practice.

Practices tend to be situated in institutions. Although institutions are supposed to support the practice by pursuing *external goods* such as money and power (akin to Habermas’s *steering media* of money and power), under bureaucratic capitalism the external goods come to dominate practices – practices are colonised when pressured to adjust to the pursuit of external goods rather than their own internal goods and the goods of the communities in which they take place. When external goods dominate, the practices are prevented from facilitating human flourishing, and the practices in which they take part are instrumentalised and oriented to the acquisition of these external goods.

These goods of effectiveness are most directly pursued by managers of institutions, who are themselves removed from the practice. The primary function of managers, according to MacIntyre, is manipulation. This manipulation takes place to ensure that the activity of workers is oriented ultimately to external goods. As Knight (2007, p. 115) puts it, to manage is “to treat something apart from its own nature and good and to use it instead as a means to ones own [untutored] ends”. Concerns about managerial control were systematised in the *critical organizational theory* that grew in the 1960s, which emphasised

the tendency for institutions in bureaucratic societies to exert control. In the first instance, this control is manifest in the selection of workers. As Etzioni points out,

the role of selection [of personnel in institutions] should be especially emphasized because the liberal-humanist tradition, which prevails in the social sciences, tends to underplay its importance and to stress that of socialization. Actually, various studies indicate that a small increase in the selectivity of an organization often results in a disproportionate large decrease in the investments required for control (Etzioni, 1967, p. 399).

However, selection alone is not sufficient to ensure compliance. As Etzioni (1967) explains, the control function of institutions entails that “performances desired by organizational norms will be rewarded while undesirable performances will be punished”. This control takes the form of physical, material or symbolic means – essentially coercive power, material reward or prestige. These methods of control are necessary, Etzioni argues, because organisations cannot be sure that the staff they recruit “would automatically perform as required” (Etzioni, 1967, p. 399).

Despite the corrupting influence of some institutions, social practices, connected to the common goods of communities, can act as the bases of resistance to colonisation. On one hand social practices should nurture virtues, such as justice, courage, and honesty (to which one might add, if we accept MacIntyre’s argument that we are *dependent*, rational animals, solidarity) in the individual practitioner. On the other hand, virtues learned through practices enable the practitioner to become good for the community, and the practice itself should contribute to the rationally understood goods of a community. The pursuit of such goods enables people to reflect on their value and to recognise threats to them. Effectively, the pursuit of internal goods is resistance to colonisation.

### 3. Journalism and Academia as Practices

(a) *Journalism as a Practice*. Some fifteen years ago James Aucoin (1993) asked whether and how journalism can be considered a practice. As he notes, the status of journalism has been contested for decades – especially in relation to the concept of professionalism. Discussions over this latter generally refer to the perceived need for journalists to attain certain standards as journalists. However, this impulse to professionalisation has been resisted by



those who argue that it would lessen the *freedom* of journalists to pursue the truth. For journalism to play a role in so-called democratic societies it calls upon liberal democratic values such as freedom of speech. This freedom would be restricted under professionalisation by restricting the parameters of the practice and also by restricting the possibility of participation. Consequently Aucoin suggests practice as a more adequate concept through which to understand journalistic practice.

Understanding journalism as a practice enables us to understand the goods pursued through journalism as well as the institutional constraints on that pursuit. In MacIntyre's analysis, we should consider the goods that are *internal* to the practice or *goods of excellence*. The pursuit of truth is often described as the chief good of journalism, and its pursuit takes place in the interest of citizens and their communities. The pursuit of truth requires certain techniques of journalism, such as witnessing, verification, interviewing and so on. However, practices are not simply techniques or skills (such as bricklaying), though they do require the exercise of them, but are *social goods* such as building (of which bricklaying is a part), which MacIntyre calls "the goods of community" (Knight, 2007, p. 149). The internal goods of journalism can be read off various statements, codes of ethics and so on. In this sense, Kovach and Rosenstiel's *Elements of Journalism* (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2003, pp. 11-13), which include the claim that journalism's first obligation is to truth, that its first loyalty is to citizens (especially to provide citizens as members of a public with a forum for criticism), that journalists must be independent of those about whom they write (especially the powerful), can be read as standards of excellence to which good journalists aspire. Similarly the National Union of Journalists' Code of Conduct (2006) is premised on an implicit understanding of the journalist's role in democratic society – most fundamentally the pursuit of *truth* in the public interest. In this sense journalism has an internal connection to a public. To sustain these goods, virtues such as justice, courage, truthfulness and solidarity should be achieved and sustained within the shared tradition of journalism and among the wider community – such virtues come in to sharper relief when faced with repression.

**(b) *Academia as a Practice.*** Despite the perceived gulf between the practice of journalism and that of academia, there are plenty of similarities. The internal goods of academic practices have traditionally depended on the existence of academic freedom. In this sense, academics, like journalists, have traditionally based their practice on the understanding that they must occupy a special role in which they are afforded rights that are not normally available to *ordinary* members of the public. For instance, the Universities

of the World International Conference convened by UNESCO in Nice in 1950 (recalled more recently by the International Association of Universities and the Global Colloquium of University Presidents, 2005) stipulated three indissociable principles for which every university should stand, namely:

1. the right to pursue knowledge for its own sake and to follow *wherever the search for truth may lead*;
2. the tolerance of divergent opinion and freedom from political interference;
3. the obligation as social institutions to promote, through teaching and research, the principles of freedom and justice, of human dignity and solidarity, and to develop mutually material and moral aid on an international level.

Clearly such principles lend themselves to the same virtues as those embodied in good journalists. Similar principles were articulated in the UK's 1988 Education Reform Act (section 202), which sought to ensure

that academic staff have freedom within the law to question and test received wisdom, and to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions, without placing themselves in jeopardy of losing their jobs or privileges they may have at their institutions

Though there is no guide to the goods of academia, we can surmise that it is good for academics to pursue the truth about the world in which we live, to investigate and explain to the broader academic community, and to hope that this has some impact on ordinary people, what they know and how they act for their own good vis a vis the good of the communities in which they live. In the first instance, this development of uncorrupted knowledge is published in journals and books. In the second instance, it is engaged by students, whose practices it may inform. Finally it ought to be circulated and debated in public, and if appropriate, contribute to the good of communities.

Effectively journalism and academia share a number of internal goods, such as the proclaimed facilitation of democratic engagement in the community, to hold power to account and to engage in independent critique, to interpret the world on the basis of research, fact finding and verification, and to pursue the truth, which requires honesty.

## 4. Journalism, Academia and Institutions

**(a) Journalism and Institutions.** Although MacIntyre believes that “the history and structure of a practice is never to be identified with the history of and structure of the institutions which are the bearers of that practice” (Knight, 2007, p. 144), understanding the history of institutions can help us understand the limitations placed on the practice. This directs our attention to the problems not just of the institutions that directly sustain journalists, but also of the *secondary* institutional structures with which they interface and of the institutional order as a whole.

Accounts of the perniciousness of the institutional order in which journalism finds itself are well documented, though it is expedient to recount them briefly here. In the first instance, the materials used by journalistic institutions (offices, computers, desks, light bulbs and so on) are produced under a capitalist mode of production. This means that the autonomy from a particular institutional order, even in *public service* institutions, is limited – they must pay for the means of production. The response of private news organisations has tended to be to integrate into that system – to buy and rent the means of production, and cover those costs with revenue raised by selling journalistic products. Thereby journalistic copy is commodified, and the audience is then moulded to form a specific consumer group as purchasers of that commodity – *public goods* are replaced by managerially ordered customer satisfaction.

The creation of consumer groups serves a double purpose – it continues to be produced for the recognisable commodity that is the news outlet, but also as a recognisable commodity itself, access to which is sold to advertisers. In this sense the commitment to the good of a public or community is weakened as competing journalistic products compete for different fragmented consumer groups, whose separateness is reinforced through such competition. The ultimate institutional goal of most private news institutions tends to be to generate profit from these activities, or at least to flourish in a competitive commercial environment. To ensure this occurs, a layer of executive management is necessary. Removed from the production process, the executive layer ensures the business as a whole runs efficiently and that it meets the needs and desires of the major investors and advertisers. In the former case, much of the interest in the political economy of media has focussed on moguls such as Murdoch or the holdings of media companies. For example, the Columbia Journalism Review’s Who Owns What (<http://www.cjr.org/resources/>) considers only the holdings of AOL Time Warner, as economically significant but it is more significant that the company itself is 73% owned by U.S. Trust Co, Capital Research, Axa, Barclays Bank, Citygroup bank, Wellington Management Company, State Street Corporation,

Dodge Street and Cox and other corporate investment groups (September 2005 stock portfolio). This problem of institutional investors is in many respects far more acute because such institutions cannot contemplate a practice, they can only consider the input-output relations of investments for profit. This means that investors and executives are able to consider the journalists and their work largely in terms of the capacity to generate surplus value for primary and secondary institutions, the success of which contributes to the economic well-being of the host state.

The need to speak to a specific consumer group goes some way to affecting the particularity of journalistic practices and news discourses, but it is also the case that the external institutions affect journalistic practices and news discourses. Despite journalistic claims to *objectivity*, liberal-democratic understandings of politics pervade the general outlook of news organisations and, all too often, the orientation of individual journalists. This does not mean that journalists are forced or otherwise compelled to adopt a particular explanatory framework. Rather, practices and institutions of journalism interface with dominant political institutions, and consequently tend to marginalize and discredit other forms of political activity, and often the self activity of the communities in which they exist. In the first instance, news organisations tend to develop structures and departments that mirror those of the dominant institutional order, compartmentalising into home affairs, business and finance, foreign and international and so on. In the second instance, recruitment and promotion tends to favour those who do not find such an interface problematic (cf. Etzioni). For instance, Lee Sigelman's (1973) research into bias in American journalism found that "biased news coverage is found to be the product of a series of *organizational processes* which are structured to avoid conflict between reporters and their superiors" (emphasis added). This is why it is often so difficult to prove control in news organisations, because if agreeable journalists are recruited, there will be few substantial conflicts over their output. Noam Chomsky made this point in an interview with the BBC's Andrew Marr, when the latter proposed that Chomsky's propaganda model implied that he practices self-censorship. Chomsky's response was "I don't say you're self-censoring - I'm sure you believe everything you're saying; but what I'm saying is, if you believed something different, you wouldn't be sitting where you're sitting" (BBC, 1996).

As a consequence of these institutional interfaces with the dominant institutional order, news discourses come to presume, reproduce and protect certain dominant norms and values (Allan, 2004) – the sanctity of property, the basic legitimacy of and rights of the state and capital, the benevolence of foreign policy, the idea of the nation state, the legitimacy of standing armies, the *reasonableness* of political positions, the need for economic efficiency and so on.

Of course, despite reservations about the imposition of media institutions on the practice of journalism, it is still held by most journalists that they do pursue certain social goods such as the truth, justice, the public interest, and checks on the powerful, which require journalists to nurture the virtues of honesty, justice and courage. Clearly there are challenges to their capacity to pursue these goods, and their self-belief is – with good reason – often referred to as a “powerful occupational mythology” (Aldridge and Evetts, 2003, p. 547) or the “occupational ideology of journalism” (Deuze, 2005). If *ideology* is understood as the construction of a myth that denies the reality of the situation, then perhaps there is a clear *occupational ideology* of journalism. However, the claims of journalists can also be read as aspirations. Few journalists would argue that they are always already free to pursue internal goods. And those who do tend to be journalists working in institutions that very consciously try to balance the internal goods of journalism with the external goods pursued by the institution. Nevertheless, we can see that private institutions in which journalists work are necessarily colonised by the pursuit of external goods, and journalism itself can become corrupted if part of this pursuit.

**(b) *Academia and Institutions.*** Despite criticisms of the institutional context of journalistic practice, academics outside the field of education are often less ready to reflect on their own context, less ready to consider the colonisation of their own institutions and their pursuit of external goods. Indeed, academics may well feel that they have relative autonomy to a similar degree to journalists. Though academics do not experience processes of *editorial* control, managerial pressure can be similarly imposing. The Global Colloquium’s statement on Academic Freedom notes that,

the most fundamental threats to academic freedom have come from the state, whose political power and disposition to regulate often stands in opposition to the university’s need for institutional autonomy (Global Colloquium of University Presidents, 2005).

It goes on to implore institutions to protect the internal goods of academia

Academic institutions bear a heavy responsibility to protect the scholars and students who work within them from improper pressures, whether *political, cultural, economic, or ideological*. Universities must maintain and encourage

freedom of inquiry, discourse, teaching, research, and publication, and they must protect all members of the academic staff and student body against external and internal influences that might restrict the exercise of these freedoms. (Global Colloquium of University Presidents, 2005).

The problem with such a demand is that British university managers are increasingly compliant with the state's disposition to regulate. Indeed, this surrender of independence and the betrayal of public trust is intensifying in the British university sector. Alongside public media as it is increasingly driven by commercial criteria (Glover, 2007).

As Alex Callinicos notes in a recent pamphlet on universities, they cannot be simply separated from the economy and the state. The servitude being imposed on universities is intensified under the ideological trope of the postmodern *knowledge society*. In particular, universities

are being reconstructed to provide British and foreign corporations with the academic research and the skilled workers that they need to stay profitable. At the same time they are being transformed from scholarly institutions to profit centres earning foreign exchange for the economy of the United Kingdom (Callinicos, 2007, p. 5).

The key to future economic performance, as far as the state is concerned, is to harness and steer the so-called *knowledge resources* of the nation and to improve *economic performance*. For example, in a report on the economic impact of UK higher education institutions Universities UK (2006) claims that universities 'boost the value of UK plc', without for a moment considering, it seems, the fascistic elements of such a statement. The Secretary of State for Education and Skills, Alan Johnson, responded by congratulating Universities UK for accepting servitude,

I welcome this report which rightly sets higher education at the heart of the wider economy. I hope more employers will increasingly see all higher education providers as highly effective partners in creating long term prosperity (Universities UK, 2006).

So, little is left for those who might not consider the status quo to be acceptable. There seems to be no alternative to serving the state and the economy, and attempts to assert the internal goods of academic practice against this process tend to be met with dismissal. For example, Tony Blair notes the importance of *disinterested learning*, but juxtaposes it only to so-called anti-elitism, false-democratization, social justice and economic efficiency

We have not thereby abandoned the classic Cardinal Newman account of the university. Colleges as sites of disinterested learning are one of the great parts of our civilisation. But we have grafted onto it a very modern phenomenon – that the knowledge that was once the preserve of an elite is now the indispensable requirement for economic advance. (Blair Speech on University Funding, 15 Feb 07).

This is to say that the internal goods of academia can be pursued as long as they does not stymie *economic advance*. So, there is a clear orientation of the modern university to serve the economy. As Howard Newby explained when he was in charge of HEFCE, “It was once the role of Governments to provide for the purposes of universities; it is now the role of universities to provide for the purposes of Governments” (Newby, 2004).

This reorientation has intensified since the British Government's removal of a £3000 cap on university fees in 2010, and the subsequent 2011 Education White Paper. In the first instance the removal of a cap on fees was instigated by then Business Secretary, Peter Mandelson, who appointed the former Chair of British Petroleum to report on the “viability” of alternative funding models. The removal of the cap on fees has certainly moved students to take a more consumerist approach to their educational experience. Indeed in the late 1980s the Conservative Higher Education Minister made precisely this point when he “decided that students must be forced to borrow – in order to learn the disciplines of the market” (Low, 1994). This change in attitude has been supported by institutions and government bodies that seek to bureaucratise relationship between academics (that is between students and lecturers) alongside the bureaucratisation of “feedback” and evaluation. Thus communicative spaces in which academics in universities can interact are literally closed down and replaced by quantifiable, depersonalised forms that capture data that can be analysed by managers to assess “performance”.

The Education White Paper in turn was published by the UK's Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. We can see in this first sense that educational

policy was directed with a primary concern for external goods. Indeed, this point was made in the Campaign for the Public University's 2011 manifesto *In Defence of Public Higher Education*, which was written by academics, thus focusing on the internal goods of education – it noted that the government “has a vision of the market and hope it operates... but it has no separate vision of higher education and its benefits to students and wider society”. It goes on to suggest that the White Paper “makes no mention of wider public values and it advocates introducing competition and for-profit providers discharged from all responsibilities for such values”. Thus, thinking and policy on education has been colonised.

The educationalist Ronald Barnett (2003) notes the significance of ideologies accompanying this process of colonisation: *quality*, *competition* and *entrepreneurialism*. The perniciousness of these ideologies is identified in three areas: epistemology, communicative processes and ontology. The *epistemological* quest for truth becomes perverted in the ‘entrepreneurial university’ as knowledge becomes subject to the test of success or usefulness. The *communicative processes* of the university are transformed under entrepreneurialism, which “bequeaths a form of communication oriented not to mutual understanding but towards success” (Barnett, 2003, p. 71). To the degree that there is understanding, it is only “validated by external criteria – of income growth, of the markets that may open and even of projecting the university’s image” (Barnett, 2003, p. 72). *Ontologically*, entrepreneurialism changes the identities and purposes of academics and of universities. Under the general processes of marketization, “the capacity of the university to hold up its own discourses to society and to go on subjecting them to critical scrutiny would shrink. Under conditions of marketization, the university could lose its potential as a vehicle for collective social learning, assisting public debate” (Barnett, 2003, p. 73). It can be seen that these epistemological, communicative and ontological problems are similar to those faced by the institutions in which journalists work.

To achieve this structural transformation, academics are faced by some of the institutional and managerial controls experienced by journalists. In many institutions the desire to control activities has resulted in the adoption of what Rochford (2003) refers to as hard management, a phenomenon seen in journalism many years before (Cottle, 1999; Greenslade, 2003; Hardt and Brennan, 1995; Hardt, 2000; McChesney, 2001; Murdoch, 1982; Neil, 1996; Tunstall, 1996; Whitaker, 1981, Walker, 2000). Hard managers are

resolved to reshape and redirect the activities of [the academic] community through funding formulas and other mechanisms of accountability imposed from outside the academic community, management mechanisms created



and largely shaped for application to large commercial enterprises (Trow, cited in Rochford, 2003, p. 254).

Hard managers subsume academic practice under external goods 'imposed from outside' at the expense of those goods internal to the practice. This status change, argues Rochford (2003, p. 252), increases the "employer's right to manage and control ... The temptation to exercise that control grows with the growing value of the university name as a reputational asset". In turn, Rochford explains that

From the perspective of the academic, the contract-based relationship with the university introduces a level of control over public utterances. The need to protect the marketable reputation of the institution suggests to university management the need to create a clear set of boundaries to the public life of the academic (Rochford, 2003, p. 258).

Increasingly the role and value of an academic will be

defined by his or her value as a teacher in income-generating courses, as a consultant in the service of the university, and perhaps as a researcher attracting government funds or contributing to the reputation of the university (Rochford, 2003, p. 257).

This reorientation need not be *forced* on staff – at least not explicitly. Rather, as with journalism, and bureaucratic capitalist institutions more generally, incentives and disincentives work alongside recruitment policies and changing conditions of employment to impose soft-power. For instance, when employment contracts are short term and otherwise insecure, the threat of non-renewal looms large. Insecurity acts as a form of self-censorship – academics in this situation toe the line in the hope of improving their position, at least if, in institutions employing *hard management*, they wish to progress their careers.

The effects of the ontological readjustment of the university to embrace the economy can be read in a number of cases in which communicative competencies were curtailed. For example, in 2006 Erik Ringmar, a lecturer in Government at the LSE, was disciplined by the university for telling the truth to students about the excessive use of graduate student tutors creating

a poorer student experience than at some *lesser' institutions*. When the text of the talk was posted on his blog he was further reprimanded for publishing “offensive and potentially defamatory material”. Clearly the good of truth is overridden by the need for an undamaged corporate brand. Elsewhere, other cases have demonstrated the control that the pursuit of external goods imposes over academics. Beckett (2003) reports a number of instances in which the pursuit of external goods has corrupted internal goods. The University of Wales apparently pushed a wealthy Saudi prince through a doctorate that he seems not to have earned (Beckett, 2003). At Newcastle University Denis MacEoin “lost his lectureship in Islamic studies ... because the sponsor, the Saudi Arabian government, considered his specialism to be heretical”. Nottingham University couldn’t “afford to tell British American Tobacco where to stick the £3.8m it put into a centre for corporate social responsibility”, despite the fact that it resulted in David Thurston taking his “research team and his Cancer Research Campaign grant to London University’s school of pharmacy” (Beckett, 2003). Perhaps most important is the corrupting influence of commodification more generally, whether by the imposition of league tables in which poorer institutions are always disadvantaged or by the franchise system, wherein degree validation is “sold” by one university to another as a means of income generation. The latter had become so corrupting at the University of Wales that David Matthews (2012) referred to the latter as a “validation machine”. The University was forced to close in 2011.

We can see, then, that the internal goods of journalism and academic practice, such as the facilitation of democratic engagement in the community, holding power to account, independent critique, research, verification, truth, honesty and so on are subsumed under the instrumental pursuit of external goods. Indeed, the *Alternative White Paper: In Defence of Public Higher Education* notes in its second proposition that the capacity of universities to act as independent institutions is threatened by their subjection to private interests, expressing the same concerns as have journalists and journalist unions about the impact of ownership, commercialism on journalistic independence. On this argument, the ‘primary orientation’ of academics ‘is to collegial relations of peer review, to the testing of arguments and to public debate’. On this analysis, ‘Critical knowledge serves a public good that is guaranteed by the character of the university as an *institution*’. When education is subject to commercial criteria, the character of the institution changes, and the primary orientation of academics begins to change – to serve universities as private interests and private goods. This change restricts the communicative freedom practised in such institutions internally and externally, which can also impact upon the educational practices they are supposed to facilitate.

## 5. The Impacts on Journalism Education

**J**ournalism education does not take place in a vacuum. We cannot abstract journalists from their institutional contexts, nor academics from theirs. Once we understand that both journalism and academia are increasingly colonised by the pursuit of external goods, we can trace some of the specific patterns of domination, and then begin to consider possible sources and methods of resistance.

As I have set out, higher education in the UK is increasingly subject to systemic demands, mediated by new categories of actor (customer-students, external clients, knowledge partners, external employers, various layers of management and so on) and new processes. Most obviously we can see that academics are increasingly being encouraged, and in many cases forced, to adapt and create courses to meet “market demand”. This “demand” comes from would-be customer-students who are themselves increasingly forced to consider “employability” as a central concern. This concern is forced insofar as the introduction of high fees forces students to consider the primary ends of the educational experience as financial security.

On the other side, academics are pushed to consider how to ensure that students can meet the perceived needs of employers. When we consider where investment and journalism jobs are – gossip magazines, tabloid newspapers, in-house propaganda (and increasingly outside journalism altogether – in public relations, press offices, and other propaganda), we are forced to question the relevance of goods such as public service and citizenship against the externally oriented goods of customer satisfaction. Investigative journalism and original reporting are notoriously time-consuming and expensive (Jones and Salter, 2011, p. 17), and serious current affairs is rarely a profitable pursuit, so when the bottom line is increasingly the primary aim of news organisations (Allan, 2006), the sort of journalism that so many find crucial to democracy is not likely to find support in the “entrepreneurial” university. Research has shown a continued decline of investment in and broadcast of news and current affairs in television, and there is ongoing concern over the future of newspapers. For example, Barnett and Seymour note that “commercial television has effectively vacated political and economic current affairs, which is now covered almost exclusively by the BBC” (Barnett and Seymour, 1999), and others have found that generally peak time current affairs programming declined by 35% between 1993 and 2004 (Jury, 2005). It is here we see the tension between the economic function of journalism and its cultural-political function, wherein Kovach and Rosenstiel’s (2001, p. 17) suggestion that “the primary purpose of journalism is to provide citizens with the information they need to be free and

self-governing” can be understood as an occupational ideology (Aldridge and Evetts (2003, p. 547; Deuze, 2005).

Whilst many if not most journalists are committed to this occupational ideology, the demands of economics often mitigates against achieving the aims set therein. Cuts to resources, cuts to staffing level, the prioritisation of sales and advertising, and the ever increasing use of “free” raw material in the form of PR and press releases (Davies, 2008) has orientated journalists to the pursuit of external goods rather than those internal to the practice. Indeed, according to the NUJ,

There is little doubt that the pursuit of higher profit margins has been elevated by newspaper publishers to a dogma above standards in journalism, the welfare of their staff and the public interest of their readers.

As a consequence of this,

The direct relationship between cost-cutting including loss of jobs and poor pay and conditions and the reduction in editorial standards and loss of quality is now self-evident (NUJ, 2007).

This cannot but have an impact on journalism graduates. Indeed, journalism students, bound by a managerial take on journalism that prioritises external goods can become structurally positioned to be part of the problem, especially when analysed from the position of the worker. As a recent editorial in the NUJ’s magazine (Klaushoffer, 2009, p. 31) put it, the problem is

the growth of cheap short-term and casualised staffing and the use of interns. The Guardian has just laid off a swathe of its most senior writers in a bid to cut costs, at the same time advertising for “graduate writers” on a salary of £10,428 to cover developments in the public sector — a complex patch that requires years of expertise.

The question is, then, about the health of this form of journalism. Such analyses can be usefully illustrated with the analogous case of the pharmaceutical industry. One might expect the pharmaceutical industry to respond primarily to the human need to prevent and cure diseases and to stay alive. However, human

need is not the primary interest of the pharmaceutical industry. Rather, as capitalist enterprises, they are required to prioritise profit above all else. This has a range of consequences.

First, the medicines most likely to be developed are those that can be produced at a high level of profitability (the focus on, say, celebrity stories). Second, the desire for profitable (and perhaps unnecessary) drugs will be created through marketing and public relations (Moynihan and Henry, 2006; Moynihan Heath and Henry, 2002). Third, those drugs that are proven to be profitable will be reproduced at the expense of new drugs (Moynihan Heath and Henry, 2002), akin to churnalism. Similarly, it can be questioned whether profit-driven journalism serves the democratic purpose of invigorating the public sphere (McChesney, 2000).

The problem for journalism education is that when we see bad journalism, we must remember that it very often stems “not from morally bankrupt or untalented journalists, but from a structure that makes such journalism the rational result of its operations” (McChesney, 2003). As Brian McNair put it, critics often “overestimate the degree to which journalists are free agents ... the journalist is a cog in a wheel over whose speed and direction he or she may have little or no control” (McNair, 1998, p. 62). When this machinery extends in the supposedly independent academy, the space in which “critical knowledge serves a public good” is reduced, and is decreasingly “guaranteed by the character of the university as an institution”.

So, we see a situation in which the practices of both academia and journalism face a long-term process of colonisation through the increasingly managerial rationales of the institutions in which they are situated. At the same time, universities and media companies are working closely in partnerships that can be understood as business-to-business, with each offering institutional advantages to the other. Where universities see the introduction of hard-management structures, the ability of academics and journalists to work together as practitioners with mutual interests in truth-telling, investigation and analysis for the good of the public sphere is lessened as they become subject to and controlled by managerial criteria of institutional advantage – largely in terms of cost-benefit analysis in which “business cases” are evaluated in instrumental criteria.

As newspapers have to attract readers, so universities have to attract students. At the same time, the institutional advantages of “partnerships” mean that academics and journalists are be subordinated to managed commercial interests. Therefore, educators are left wondering what sort of education to “deliver”, when the impetus is to strip academics of their agency, as news organisations have done to journalists, and demand they assist in creating “products” are consumed and that ultimately serve industry’s commercial criteria. In a media landscape in which

the newspapers with the highest sales would hardly be called “newspapers” in any other country (see Chart 1), and in which the magazines with the highest circulations are publicity organs for some of the world’s largest corporations, or are television gossip magazines (see Chart 2), and in an online world where the media giants seem to be dominating, despite the opportunities presented by new technologies (see Salter and Jones, 2011) “market”-led educators may find themselves in a difficult position if they regard themselves as sustaining the public-interest or democratic function of journalism.

CHART 1. NEWSPAPER CIRCULATION IN THE UK

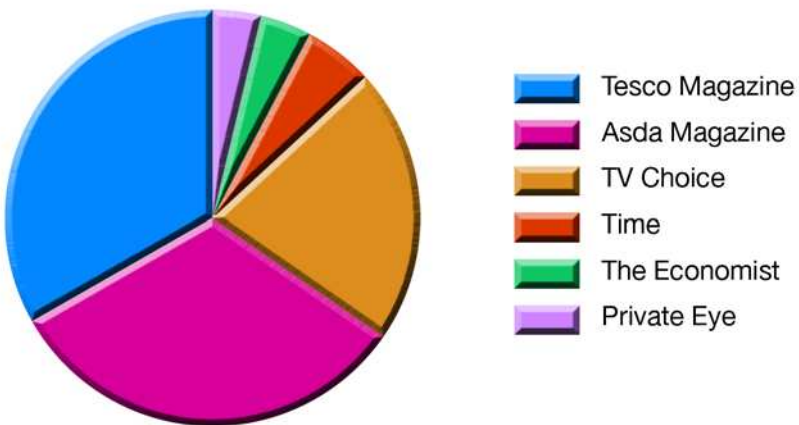
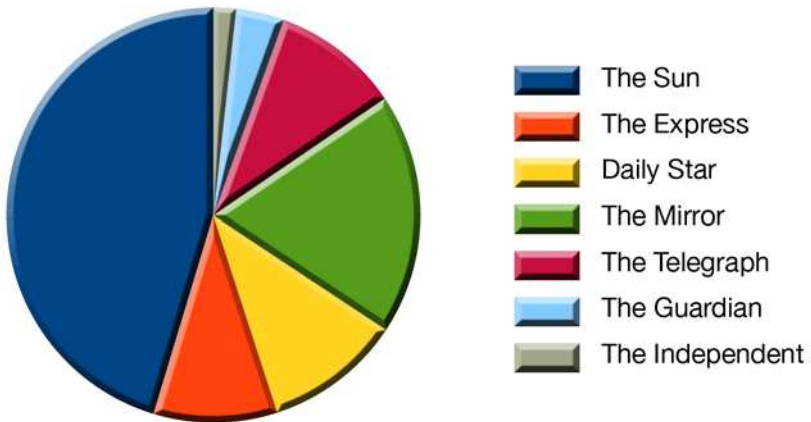


CHART 2. MAGAZINE CIRCULATION IN THE UK

When commercialisation has meant that entertainment has become the primary concern of news (Franklin, 1997; Postman, 1987), where “demand” for journalists comes from lifestyle and promotional magazines and tabloids, with PR and press offices drawing journalists away from public-interest journalism and towards private-interest publicity, so the supply needs to be met, and so democratic, rational communicative mechanisms are bypassed. Indeed, in many UK Universities journalism staff are explicitly informed that their provision must meet *only* the aspirations of prospective consumers and the needs of industry, leaving academics with no possibility of ethics. If the market demand is for prejudice and nonsense evidenced by little more than emotive ignorance, then it seems to be the duty of academics to nurture such anti-democratic Huxleyan deceitfulness.

## 6. Conclusions

There are a number of options open to universities as institutions and the communicative processes they embody or exclude. The only way for the future of these public institutions to be justly decided is for an open and wide-ranging public debate over the purpose of universities that is not itself colonised by the logic of capital and its market. There are plenty of predecessors to such a debate, some of which are noted above. Indeed MacIntyre’s thoughts on the university were articulated in his paper, “The Idea of an Educated Public”. MacIntyre posits a problem for education, namely that the goals of education should be to help people take on social roles but at the same time to increase their autonomy from the social system. For MacIntyre, the problem of education losing its independence is all to do with the *type* of system it serves. With an inequitable and unjust social system, MacIntyre suggests a problem with education-as-conformism – it reproduces those inequities and injustices. Rather, for MacIntyre (2002, p. 2) a good education in a bad society “will to a remarkable extent render those who profit from it unfit to participate compliantly and successfully in the social and economic order”. On this account the university’s primary role should be to pursue the goods of the community in which it is situated, developing, maintaining and expanding its communicative capacities.

As regards journalism specifically, it is possible to submit to the colonising pressures and to concentrate on commercial forms of journalism, to teach students how to write obscene items on *asylum-seekers* eating the Queen’s swans, to pursue and publish the latest *news* about Big Brother or the latest celebrity, or to help reinforce and celebrate the vacuousness of consumer culture, that is to go the way of Newszak (Franklin, 1997). Alternatively, academics may

choose the route of critical teaching, wherein students are taught to become good, reflective journalists who buck the market (e.g. Reese and Cohen, 2000; MacDonald, 2006), particularly by finding new ways to engage the public as citizens rather than consumers (Rosen, 1999). Here a critical virtue ethics would be contrasted with compliance, i.e. simply learning to obey conventions. A critical virtue ethics would encourage the development of independent practical reasoning, creating practitioners who would pursue the virtues of justice, honesty and courage, and place them above the institution's pursuit of external goods. Such practitioners would be able to make judgements on the basis of the internal goods of journalism and the common goods of communities, whilst understanding and resisting the pernicious effects of colonisation.

Whilst admirable aims, especially when they are linked to calls for academics to reflect on their own institutional contexts (Reese and Cohen, 2000), they cannot simply rely on a "better-thought-out professional framework" for educators, especially given the dominant institutional order in which, I have argued, *both* academics and journalists exist. Individuals, whether journalists, academics or students have only a limited capacity for resistance – especially when we consider the wider effectiveness and longevity of that resistance. This will-to-power is limited when colonised institutions cannot accommodate critical practices. There is, however, a fairly clear alternative.

As noted above, the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) has already initiated a collective campaign to save journalism, and I argue that the collective aspirations articulated through trade unions can be the strongest source of resistance to corruption. They also serve to protect independent practical reasoners whose critical ethics may set them against management. The reason for this is that they are much better positioned than an individual to engage institutions and to develop and agree standards of practice. With the development of journalism education in the university sector there is a clear opportunity to build such forms of collective resistance to colonisation and the pernicious effects of the prioritisation of external goods.

In the first instance, NUJ representatives can work with academics to give a better and more honest understanding of the challenges of pursuing the internal goods of journalism than can employers; it is workers, not managers, who can give students the best insights into practices. Together NUJ representatives and academics can understand common sources of problems, and try to consider ways of developing educational provision to take account of these. The central role of the NUJ in developing a code of conduct and orchestrating campaigns for good journalism should be flagged to students, who should also be made aware of the value of being involved in such an organisation. The NUJ can (and does) advise on pertinent issues such as work experience, and



help explain the dangers of such free labour for those seeking a career in journalism. Students who have been educated about the pressures that prevent journalists from pursuing its internal goods, such as the political economy of media organisations, the problems of discourse and hegemony, institutional interfaces, management and recruitment, might find ways to challenge them through the NUJ, whether through its campaigns, legal advice, representation or lobbying and campaigning.

At the same time, however, the University and College Union (UCU) should consider the critical and public purposes of the academy, and fight to defend and extend them. It is also important that the UCU confirms the status of students primarily as human beings and not as resources; that is, as ends in themselves, not as means to the ends of others. As in media organisations, so too in universities, the best way to defend against corrupting managers and the dominance of the external goods they pursue is to act collectively. Without collective action to defend the internal goods of the university, its critical and democratic functions will continue to weaken until most universities become intermediaries between employers and future employees, leaving a minority of universities to teach non-instrumentally to an elite.

Ideally, universities and news organisations might move towards some kind of real democratisation, typified in the 1970s by The Council for Academic Freedom and Democracy, which, despite its age seems more important today than in the 1970s. The council had argued that academic freedom (as a good internal to academic practice) cannot be separated from real democratic processes, from proper participation in decision-making, from *internal* decision-making. Their call was not for academics to become insulated and self-referential, but for the development of deep democratic structures that would draw in teachers, researchers, students, technical, secretarial and manual staff. The structures of representation would also allow external participation, calling for representative structures to include parents, trade unionists, business people and so on (Stoneman, 1970).

It is, however, insufficient for the NUJ or the UCU to concern themselves solely with their own spheres of activity. Given that both the academy and media institutions exist in the context of a dominant institutional order, and that the treatment of humans as means is systemic, any attempt to adjust the specific context of a specific practice without considering the broader social system cannot grasp the full range of systemic constraints. At the same time, if the NUJ and the UCU are to pursue the internal goods of their practices whilst also understanding the shared goods of the community, and if they recognise the constraints as systemic, then the need for general systemic change becomes apparent. Indeed, the more that the state encourages media institutions and universities to interface with the economy, the more journalists and academic unions can recognise and resist the root causes. So, for example if demand for university courses, whether journalism or otherwise, is

essentially stimulated by the needs of the economy, we must pay attention to the functioning of the economy, the processes of inclusion and exclusion that it structures, and how best these can be challenged. Without this recognition, resistance will be frustrated.

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