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# Review of Friedrich Dürrenmatt, by Gerhard P. Knapp

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### Professional Images of the Journalist (Pre-1900)

<u>Characteristics</u>	<u>Positive Protagonist</u>	<u>Negative Protagonist</u>
<i>Label</i>	• "independent"	• "dependent"
<i>Social origins</i>	• upper or middle classes	• middle or lower classes
<i>Social mobility</i>	• none	• declining, seldom ascending
<i>Actual preparatory training</i>	• "academic journalist"	• "Statuswechsler"
<i>Fictional preparatory training</i>	• academic — higher education completed	• academic — higher education usually interrupted; seldom nonacademic
<i>Financial circumstances</i>	• independent	• dependent
<i>Principal activity</i>	• writing	• editing
<i>Field of activity</i>	• <i>Gesinnungspresse</i>	• mainly <i>Gesinnungspresse</i> , seldom nonpartisan press
<i>Political engagement</i>	• yes	• no
<i>Preferred target group</i>	• the people	• lobby groups
<i>Imagined characteristics of readership</i>	• positive: elite	• negative: elite
<i>Perceived professional abilities</i>	• talented	• untalented
<i>Professional motives</i>	• idealistic, political; to implement progressive ideas	• materialistic; to secure one's own material existence
<i>Professional ethics</i>	• yes	• no
<i>Professional motivation</i>		
(a) "material"		
• to earn money		27 %
(b) "egoistic"		
• self-advancement		21 %
• to exert power		12 %
• to shock or destroy		5 %
(c) "idealistic"		
• to change things	21 %	
• to enlighten	5 %	
• to educate	4 %	
• to control	3 %	
• to help	1 %	

*Source* Based on Cecilia von Studnitz, *Kritik des Journalisten* (Munich: K. G. Saur, 1983) 71, 129-33; percentage figures for "Professional motivation" refer to period 1789-1980s (N=170 cases).

Studnitz's study and some of the preceding argument might be regarded as being either too conjectural or not conjectural enough. At the very least, the issues raised here bring together social and political questions in ways that provide a link between this section and the next. Three observations of a methodological nature can demonstrate this further.

First, in trying to avoid overly schematic conclusions and yet give meaning to contradictory information, one must frequently rely on what journalists said about themselves — always a rather risky enterprise — as much as what others said about them. In both cases, the problem is: just how much of the rhetoric about journalists' place in society can be taken at face value? In the end, it is impossible to distinguish categorically between the journalist's actual status in society, descriptions of the status that journalists would have *liked* to enjoy, and ascriptions of relative status based on comparisons with other groups against which Germans also ritually inveighed (the schoolteacher, the Catholic priest, the *Spießbürger*).<sup>87</sup>

Second, we need to keep political biases constantly in view. Here the *readers'* point of view should be considered. To what degree did the sharp polemical tone of political journalism in Germany contribute to public distaste for the journalist as an individual? What relative value was put on information, opinion, and style? Some readers voted with their feet when they selected a "cheese and sausage rag" over a party organ because it offered more up-to-date stock prices; others registered their opposite preference when they looked for a lead editorial spiced with a "salty style." But did readers consider journalists in their multiple identities — as public advocates, as employees in a commercial undertaking, as simple reporters of everyday events, and as *Berufspolitiker*? Would such readers have agreed with Max Weber, who distinguished between "experts" (*Fachbeamte*) and "political functionaries" (*politische Beamte*) but who also recognized that in modern society both functions often go together?<sup>88</sup>

As noted previously, there are many reasons liberals saw a quintessentially "modern" brand of journalism as a good thing. They tended to argue, for example, that political differences were anything but a handicap to the development of journalism as an institution and, perhaps, even as a profession. Could this explain the willingness of liberal writers to satirize *themselves* — not only because it seemed both laudable and inevitable that they should do so, but also because it underscored their particular understandings about talent, commitment, and professionalism? Conservatives, on the other hand, found far less comfort in the fact that a lively, up-to-date brand of journalism accurately reflected an anxiety-ridden age. Polemical journalism, by magnifying differences and divisions, could never appeal to those who prized social harmony and political stasis above all else. Polemical journalism, in their eyes, could never be truly "professional" journalism. Maximilian Harden