

## BOOK REVIEW

# *Jornalismo na era virtual*

BERNARDO KUCINSKI

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REVIEWED BY **Rogério Christofolletti**

Despite being a night of honors – after all, the Journalism course at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul had reached its 50th anniversary - the opening of the fifth edition of the National Forum of Journalism Professors ended in a less festive way. The lecturer's words reflected an urgent need for professional journalists and researchers to rethink the ethical basis of journalism in Brazil. And that call caused a certain anticlimax in the luxurious Salon of Events in the university.

It rained during that night of April 2002, and the ethical crisis, expressed by Bernardo Kucinski throughout his speech, darkened even more the sky of the journalism professors that were gathered in Porto Alegre. The diagnosis was clear: we live in an ethical void in a post-modern era, an environment emphasizing individualism, the death of utopias and an apparently unsteady moral atmosphere.

In times like these, original values are essential, and it is based on them that Ethics will be able to redraw another kind of journalism, strategic for and vital to a new project of society. But beyond propositions, Kucinsky confessed that he was in a crisis, with the imminence of giving up what he called “fundamentalist ethics”, which he had cultivated throughout his entire life. The testimony, the crisis and the urgency of the search, all of these led to his words of strength and gravity.

And it is this same spirit of crisis that pervades *Jornalismo na Era Virtual* in full. It is not in vain that Kucinski's lecture opens the volume, which contains eight other articles that this São Paulo University professor produced during the last seven years.

The symptoms of a collapse of reason in Ethics permeate the pages of this book, whether in the identification of signs of corruption in Brazilian journalism, or through moral gaps that online journalism nourishes (plagiarism, apocryphal writing, and other copyright violations...).

The collapse occurs also in practices of pre-judgment and idolization of the market, which the neo-liberal mentality sediments in economic journalists; it manifests itself in the erasing of the limits of responsible action for professional journalists and materializes in the lying, falsity and replacement of reporting by fiction.

Kucinski worries about all these problems. The author offers an extensive study of corruption at the national level, and its ramifications (not always visible) in the media. With that, he reveals historical roots that crystallized the promiscuity between press and power, and gives details of the modalities in which these relations have operated until today. Kucinski is clear when he points out, for example, that corruption in the media occurs on two levels: between the journalistic press and power, and among journalists, facts and sources. And the author adds that today, corruption occurs mainly in Economic Journalism, because this line has come dangerously close to the financial power and has established with it “promiscuous and venal relations”. Kucinski knows about this. As a journalist, he worked for important national media - such as *Exame* magazine and *Gazeta Mercantil* newspaper – and international media, such as *The Guardian* (British), and London’s *BBC*. In the capacity of an academic figure and a researcher, he published, among other books, *Jornalismo Econômico* (Edusp, 1996), which earned him the prestigious Jabuti Award in 1997.

Aware that today Economics and Politics do not walk separately, and that media analysis cannot ignore these fields, Kucinski talks not only about journalistic products, but also about professional practices. Merciless in his criticisms, the author is no less condescending with his peers and with himself. Modern paradoxes seen by him in journalistic practices prove this posture, as well as the essay that opens *Jornalismo na Era Virtual*. The environment is in a crisis and nobody seems to be able to escape from it. The crawling corruption that contaminates journalistic processes and the ethical void, the holiness of the market, the everything-goes morals, all these permeate the social fabric, corrupting even its core, changing its face and eating away its spirit. The Jason Blair “incident” (involving a reporter of *The New York Times* who fabricated stories), that Kucinski analyses at the end of the book, is just the tip of the iceberg, the most apparent wound in a moribund organism.

The movement undertaken by the book is that of a centrifuge. Kucinski identifies in himself a crisis of convictions, and relates it to a major crisis, of world proportions. The reader emerges from an internal crisis of the author and walks in the direction of an external situation

that reflects this state of things. In doing this, throughout the book's pages the reader realizes that the author's crisis is just a symptom of a major, deeper illness, that crosses not just moral frontiers, but also geographical ones.

Although the environment is that of a devastated land, there are ways out, and answers to this complex scenario that the author also points out. But the impression you have from reading *Jornalismo na Era Virtual* is that, at the point that answers crystallize, new questions come to mind. Could it be different, when it comes to Ethics?

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