Household, Totalitarianism and Cyberspace. Philosophical Perspectives on Privacy Drawing on the Example of Hannah Arendt

Lecture at the 32C3

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- Household
- Totalitarianism
- Cyberspace
- Philosophical
- Privacy
- Hannah Arendt

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1. Defining Privacy
2. Hannah Arendt
3. Why protecting privacy?
4. Today's examples

Privacy

- ▶ 'Privacy' is hard to define
- ▶ Metaphors: realm, sphere,…
- ▶ German terms Privatsphäre, Kernbereich privaten Lebens, … not the exact same meaning
- ▶ ex-negativo-definitions: the opposite of (the) public
- ▶ several attempts to define: normative, descriptive
- ▶ "Nothing belongs 'by nature' in the realm of the private." Rössler, B. (2005): *The Value Of Privacy,* 98
- ▶ relation with other abstract nouns: freedom, security

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- Aristotle (?) 4th Century BCE

- Liberalism
  - Thomas Hobbes 1651
  - John Locke 1689
  - Jean-Jacques Rousseau
  - Immanuel Kant 1793, 1797
  - Gottfried Wilhelm Hegel 1821
  - John Stuart Mill 1859

- Samuel D. Warren/ Louis Brandeis 1890

- Norbert Elias 1939
- Hannah Arendt, Jürgen Habermas, Richard Sennett, Erving Goffman
- feminist critique 1960s/70s
- Anita Allen, Jean L. Cohen, Diana H. Coole, Jean Bethke Elshtain, C. MacKinnon, Susan Moller Okin, Carole Pateman

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- marital rape § 177 StGB 1997
- education without violence § 1631 BGB 2000
- Informational Self-determination (informationelle Selbstbestimmung) BVerfGE 65,1 1983

1. Proprietary Privacy
2. Local Privacy
3. Decisional Privacy
4. Informational Privacy
5. Temporal Aspects

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Decisional Privacy

"claim the right to protection from unwanted access in the sense of unwanted interference or of heteronomy in our decisions and actions."

Informational Privacy

"[...] when people claim [...] access to information about them that they have no desire to see in the wrong hands."

Local Privacy

"the right to protection against the admission of other people to spaces or areas."
Rössler, B. (2005): *The Value Of Privacy,*

Hannah Arendt (1906–1975)

Figure: Artwork by Vincent Pollak 2013, based on a photograph by Ricarda Schwerin 1961
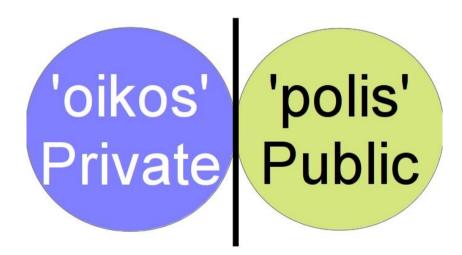
Hannah Arendt's Motto

"This never ought have happened."
"Dies hätte nie geschehen dürfen."

Arendt's Ideas in a nutshell

- ▶ Public realm
- ▶ (Political) action: unforeseeable consequences, spontaneous
- ▶ Natality: new beginning
- ▶ plurality: always with other human beings
- ▶ Tradition and totalitarian systems: attempt to replace action with behavior
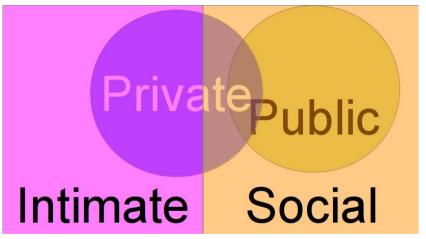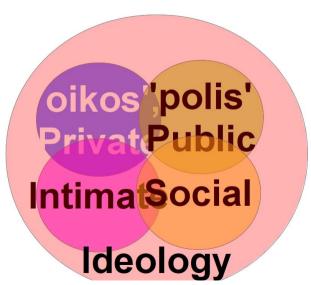- ▶ "The right to have rights."

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'oikos' Private | 'polis' Public

Figure: The Rise of the Social

Local Dimension

"It should be clear that my distinction between private and public depends on the locality where a person moves." (PRPI, S. 104)

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"Privacy was like the other, the dark and hidden side of the public realm, and while to be political meant to attain the highest possibility of human existence, to have no private place of one's own (like a slave) meant to be no longer human." (THC, 64)

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"[...] the government has a stake in the education of my child insofar as this child is supposed to grow up into a citizen, but I would deny that government had any right to tell me in whose company my child received its instruction. The right of parents to decide such matters for their children until they are grown-ups are challenged only by dictatorships." (LR, 195)

"The right of parents to bring up their children as they see fit is a right of privacy, belonging to home and family [...] Parents' rights over their children are legally restricted by compulsory education and nothing else." (LR, 211)

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"The disappearance of the gulf that the ancients had to cross daily to transcend the narrow realm of the household and 'rise' into the realm of politics is an essentially modern phenomenon. Such a gulf between the private and the public still existed somehow in the Middle Ages, though it had lost much of its significance and changed its location entirely." (THC, 33f.)

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"[...] the police in the satellite countries kept 'cadre-cards' for every citizen in the country, on which presumably not only compromising information was recorded, but information on associations, friends, family, and acquaintances which is much more valuable for totalitarian terror." (HRTI 40)

Informational Dimension II

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"The Okhrana, the Czarist [...] [secret police], is reported to have invented a filing system in which every suspect was noted on a large card in the center of which his name was surrounded by a red circle; his political friends were designated by smaller red circles and his nonpolitical acquaintances by green ones; [...] cross-relationships between the suspect's friends, political and nonpolitical, and the friends of his friends were indicated by lines between the respective circles. Obviously the limitations of this method are set only by the size of the filing cards, and, theoretically, a gigantic single sheet could show the relations and cross-relationships of the entire population. And this is the Utopian goal of the totalitarian secret police. [...] Now the police dreams that one look at the gigantic map on the office wall should suffice at any given moment to establish who is related to whom and in what degree of intimacy: and, theoretically, this dream is not unrealizable although its technical execution is bound to be somewhat difficult. If this map really did exist, not even memory would stand in the way of the totalitarian claim to domination; such a map might make it possible to obliterate people without any traces, as if they had never existed at all." OT, 433

Figure: Metadata (Butler 2010)

Influencing our Behavior

- China's "Citizen Score" (Helbing et al. 2015)
- Behavioral Advertising
- Filter Bubble (Pariser 2012)
- "Native Advertising" (Jarvis 2015)
- Profiling / Redlining (Degeling 2014)
- Cognitive und Voluntative (A-)Symmetry (Rössler 2003)

Arendt: Judging by examples to prevent "moral catastrophes"

Arendt's Warning that we need to act not just to behave, the totalitarian state's goal to reduce human beings to just behaving creatures.

Arendt's Warning: the tyranny of the majority if children are left alone with each other

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Arendt's analysis of their role in totalitarian states, secret police, 'state inside of the state'

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"As the public realm has shrunk in the modern age, the private realm has been very much extended, and the word that indicates this extension ist intimacy. Today this privacy is very much threatened again, but the threats are rather from society than from government." (PRPI, 108)

"What is necessary for freedom is not wealth. What is necessary is security and a place of one's own shielded from the claims of the public. What is necessary for the public realm is that it be shielded from private interests which have intruded upon it in the most brutal and aggressive form." (PRPI, 108)

Conclusion

We need to Protect:

- the Private and the Public "Sphere"
- the private for the public's sake and the other way around
- individual and social / common value of the private
- spontaneous action
- individuality

We should never refuse to judge.

Thank you.
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