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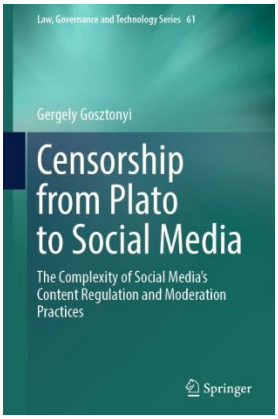
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Censorship from Plato to Social Media. The Complexity of Social Media's Content Regulation and Moderation Practices

Author: Gergely Gosztonyi (Publisher: Springer Cham 2023)

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If the question were raised, how many hours we spend on social media every day, either consuming or producing content, we would probably be surprised, even though we hardly ever leave the door without our smartphones. Yet we are blind to the effects we face and the manipulated reality influenced by the economic interests of the market players and the political games that go hand in hand. In his book Censorship from Plato to Social Media, Gergely Gosztonyi points out precisely this phenomenon. Still, rather than just focusing on what is happening in the present, he takes us back to the time of ancient Greece, showing that if we look closely, there is nothing new under the sun.

In the introduction, Gosztonyi addresses the problem of the precise definition of censorship, illustrating in an impressive way and with examples that censorship may take many forms in everyday life. As Gosztonyi indicates, it is difficult to draw the line between content regulation and censorship. However, it is sometimes equally difficult to decide whether the misleading or silence of politicians, physical abuse, or withholding of public interest information can be considered censorship. Through the examples presented, it is possible to witness both text-based and visual censorship, demonstrating that even the partial censorship of images can place narratives in a completely new context and influence the audiences. This book aims to provide us with the means to distinguish between the different censorship types and clarify the motivations behind each type. Recognizing and identifying various forms of censorship is essential for protecting fundamental rights such as freedom of expression, promoting diversity of thought, fostering critical thinking, defending against manipulation, and supporting accountability and transparency in society. By understanding the forms and underlying intent of those who impose censorship, individuals may develop a more nuanced understanding of information control and manipulation, enabling them to resist such efforts.

Following the evolution of censorship, Gosztonyi takes us back to the historical roots of censorship and shows that "the brief history of censorship" isn't that brief at all (Gosztonyi, Gergely. 2023. Censorship from Plato to Social media. Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland AG: 21. 1-189). The book provides an excellent overview of the development of censorship, from Plato's stance on the first printing of books through the international censorship landscape of the 17th and 18th centuries to the present day. Gosztonyi also describes media regulation in a comprehensive study, tracing the path from traditional media to the emergence of Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 and the current efforts to regulate social media. The book provides a better understanding of the different relationships of major powers, such as the US and China, with the media, the functioning of social media platforms, the competing interests behind them, and the impact they have on us through moderation mechanisms. Gosztonyi highlights the challenges posed by the four million gigabytes of content generated daily on Facebook alone (Gosztonyi 112) and, describes technological solutions currently in use and,

In addition to clarifying the theoretical framework, the book summarizes the extensive case law of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) and the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) on content regulation and censorship. In this section Gosztonyi leads the reader from landmark cases (such as the ECtHR's 2015 Delfi AS v. Estonia or the CJEU's 2010 Google France SARL and Google Inc. v. Louis Vuitton Malletier SA) to judgments that are so recent that the ink has barely dried on the courts' decisions (such as the cases of Frank Peterson v. Google LLC et al. and Elsevier Inc. v. Cyando AG before the CJEU).

The final chapters are devoted to current events and the relationship between censorship and the author, illustrating with precise data and graphs the Internet restrictions of recent years globally. Thanks to the extensive research of Gosztonyi, the reader may learn more about related events such as the complete internet shutdown in the Republic of Congo in 2021, the blocking of messaging apps in Senegal, and the internet disruption in Armenia amid political unrest (Gosztonyi 2023, 161-162).

Gergely Gosztonyi concludes by outlining the possible directions for the future and argues that the struggle to guarantee freedom of expression has reached a new and exciting stage; however, a framework that combines complex legal, political, and economic aspects is still to be established. The author argues that, alongside political actors, tech companies will significantly influence the vision, and in Chapter 12, Gosztonyi proposes further solutions to this complex problem (Gosztonyi 2023, 172–177).

Although the author states at the beginning of the book that his research is mainly based on human rights (Gosztonyi 2023, 4), – due to the economic orientation of social media platforms and the use of algorithm-based moderation – it would have been interesting if Gosztonyi had also extended his research to include competition and data protection aspects, in particular concerning the EU digital regulation package, and the possible effects of artificial intelligence in the field of online content filtering.

Altogether, the book is not only highly practical and informative, but also has the added advantage that, besides the more and more exciting case law, make it even more readable. Given its wide-ranging nature, this book will greatly assist in identifying the phenomenon and types of censorship, examining the evolution of media regulation, familiarizing oneself with the judicial practice and professional positions that have developed over the years, and understanding them as a whole. In light of all this, in my opinion, Gergely Gosztonyi has

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succeeded in creating a book that, in addition to its niche role, provides enjoyable content for both the professional and the general public. I could not conclude with more appropriate thoughts than the author's own words, *"I dedicate this book to* [redacted]*, to* [redacted]*, and to all the victims of censorship."*

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