The Political Relevance of Privacy: An Emotional Approach (Chile, 1800-1840)

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Abstract
This article explores the political relevance of privacy in Chile during the early nineteenth century, focusing on the relationship between public and private spheres through the role of emotions in politics. It argues that privacy became another field of political action, shaped by both political institutions and individual agencies in order to meet the demands of the emerging republican project. Political leaders such as Bernardo O'Higgins and Diego Portales exemplify the emotional self-education required to align private virtues with public ideals that were in line with the institutional legislation. While O'Higgins embraced institutional imperatives, Portales resisted them, marking a shift towards individuality and the gradual emergence of a public–private divide in Chile. To this end, sources such as newspapers, parliamentary debates, dictionaries, philosophical treatises and, above all, letters are analysed within the frameworks of both the history of emotions and egodocuments.

Keywords
Privacy – history of emotions – nineteenth century – Chilean politics.

Introduction

Our notion of privacy and its relationship with the public sphere has changed profoundly in the current digital context. The "datification" of life – that is, the sustained conversion of different aspects of life into digital data – has made us understand our privacy as closely linked to the scope of this data. At the same time, this privacy appears as a space to be protected from the intrusion of states and large corporations, which have seen the collection and processing of this data (*ergo*: of our privacy) as a means to maximize their economic benefits and deepen the surveillance mechanism of individuals. Therefore, the erosion of digital privacy has given rise to the need to reestablish a right to privacy, as well as the proliferation of digital activism to counteract such intrusion.[1]

But the relationship between public action and the private sphere has not always been so conflictive. A historical analysis of this relationship reveals, on the contrary, greater communication and even harmonization between the two dimensions. In this sense, privacy emerges as a historically situated experience, constantly subjected to negotiation with the social, political, and cultural conditions of each era.

Based on that premise, this paper aims to analyse the role played by privacy in Chilean politics in the early decades of the nineteenth century. The interest in examining this historical moment as a case study lies in its status as the founding moment of politics in Chile, as well as in many other Hispanic American countries.[2] In other words, I argue that analysing the role played by privacy in the formative stages of modern politics offers a suggestive perspective for understanding the public-private relationship in a broader sense.

The analysis of the role of privacy in politics that I here propose focuses primarily on the history of emotions. The emergence of this field of analysis, within the intellectual phenomenon of the Emotional Turn, has contributed significantly to rethinking the role of emotions in the public sphere. Initially conceived as "internal" phenomena, and therefore exclusively personal or private, emotions seemed to play no role in power dynamics.[3] However, talking about emotions in politics not only redefined our understanding of the elements involved in this field but also underlines how the private sphere participates in

1 On the concept of "datafication," see Viktor Mayer-Schönberger and Kenneth Cukier, *Big Data: A Revolution That Will Transform How We Live, Work, and Think* (Eamon Dolan Mariner, 2014); and Jose Van Dijck, "Datafication, dataism and dataveillance: Big data between scientific paradigm and ideology." *Surveillance and Society*, 12, no. 2 (2014): 197–208. And regarding contemporary political activism, see: Carissa Véliz, *Privacy is Power: Why and How You Should Take Back Control of Your Data* (Bantam Press, 2021).

2 The historian Hilda Sábato has highlighted the Latin American politics singularity. Hilda Sábato, *Republics of the New World: The Revolutionary Political Experiment in 19th -Century Latin America* (Princeton University Press, 2018).

3 Although Chilean historians have recognized the porosity between the public and the private, their reflections have not addressed the importance of this interaction in the political field. One exception that confirms the rule is Sol Serrano, but her analysis focuses on the second half of the nineteenth century. See Rafael Sagredo y Cristián Gazmuri, *Historia de la vida privada en Chile. El Chile moderno. De 1840 a 1925* (Editorial Taurus, 2011); and Sol Serrano, *¿Qué hacer con Dios en la República? Política y secularización en Chile (1845-1885)* (Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2008).

the public one and vice versa. If emotions manifest in both the private and public spheres, these seemingly opposing domains would show greater interaction precisely through emotions. This is why the history of emotions can be regarded as a suitable framework for analysing and deepening both the public sphere and the private.[4]

Nonetheless, the history of emotions has not made privacy a distinct category of analysis, although it can be connoted in other proposed categories, such as William Reddy's "emotional refuge" and Monique Scheer's "interiority."[5] For this reason, this work also draws on two other traditions of analysis that I consider complementary. The first is in ego documents, where the analysis of the production of a political "self" in the nineteenth century helps to show both the mobilization of emotions involved in this process as well as the porosity between the public and the private.[6] The second is the work conducted by the Centre for Privacy Studies at the University of Copenhagen, whose interdisciplinary work on the conceptions and experiences of privacy throughout history makes it an indisputable intellectual counterpart for the reflections I am here pursuing.[7]

The argument I want to develop is that the observation of emotions in politics redefines the fields or scope of political action, challenging the idea that politics is exclusively situated within the public sphere. On the one hand, the political institutions incorporated the private and personal dimensions of individuals into its political aims and concerns; on the other hand, the emotional transformation politicians carried out in their privacy was another way of doing politics and, thus, of influencing the public, common, or collective sphere. Therefore, the observation of political emotions in 19th-century Chile shows the mutual influence between the public and private spheres.

Next to this association between the public-rational and private-emotional, this work is based on a second premise, both of them have been extensively discussed by the intellectual traditions mentioned above. Privacy is understood to be closely linked to the emergence of a long-lasting cultural and intellectual phenomenon related to the development of the individual. As the historian François-Xavier Guerra has stated for the Hispanic American case: "Modernity is above all the 'invention' of the individual."[8] In line with

4 I take as my main references the works of Sara Ahmed, Rob Boddice, and Ute Frevert among others. Namely: Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotions* (Edinburgh University Press, 2004); Rob Boddice, *The History of Emotions* (Manchester University Press, 2018); and Ute Frevert, Kerstin Maria Pahl, et. al. *Feeling Political. Emotions and Institutions since 1789* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022).

5 William Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling. A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), 129; and Monique Scheer, *Enthusiasm: Emotional Practices of Conviction in Modern Germany* (Oxford University Press, 2021), 77. Monique Scheer tends to equate her notion of "interiority" with privacy. Despite the lack of a distinguished analytical category, the private realm has been a common topic among historians of emotions.

6 I base my understanding of this historiographical tradition on Volker Depkat, "Ego-documents," in *Handbook of Autobiography/Autofiction.* Vol I: Theory and Concepts, ed., Martina Wagner-Egelhaaf (De Grutyer, 2018), 262-267. And with regard to the Latin American case, see Ulrich Müc*ke. "Introducción. Escritura autobiográfica e historia en Hispanoamérica." Jahrbuch für Geschichte Lateinamerikas* 47, (2010): 1-10.

7 Their intellectual production is vast and significant, but I will mostly dialogue with Michaël Green, Lars Cyril Nørgaard, and Mette Birkedal Bruun, *Early Modern Privacy: Sources and Approaches* (Brill, 2022).

8 François-Xavier Guerra, *Modernidad e Independencias. Ensayos sobre las revoluciones hispánicas* (Ediciones Encuentro, 2009), 113. Nonetheless, Guerra's works echoes Charles Taylor's (1989) but does not explore

this consideration, privacy can be conceived as an experience resulting from the gradual establishment of this notion, a seemingly sovereign field that is delimited by individual desire, where individuals claim to experience relative "freedom" from the norms that govern their public life.[9] As we shall see, this experience gradually gained ground in 19th-century Chile.

To pursue the proposed argument, I will analyse sources such as newspapers, parliamentary debates, dictionaries, correspondence, among other sources, based on the emotions they contain and their role in defining privacy.

Ruling the Hearts of the Citizens

Napoleon's invasion of the Iberian Peninsula and the subsequent capture of the Spanish King Ferdinand VII in 1808 marked the beginning of political modernity for the Hispanic American countries. In both Spain and the Americas, the subjects of the Empire responded to the vacancy by establishing Government Juntas (*Juntas de Gobierno*): provisional governing institutions composed of local elites whose function was to govern during the absence of the deposed king. Despite their members' open declaration of allegiance to the monarchy, these institutions in Spanish America will, paradoxically, play a crucial role in the late pursuit of political independence.

The Governing Juntas in Hispanic America were the institutions from which a public space emerged. Through debate and public deliberation, the formation of opinions, and the open reading of pamphlets and newspapers, the *criollos* (Creoles) underwent a novel process of political modernization.[10] The Creoles experienced the act of governing firsthand, for which they relied on a new political vocabulary to meet the unprecedented challenge: Where does sovereignty lie now in the absence of the king? What are the elements that guarantee the legitimacy of rulers and their institutions? And ultimately, what political regime should replace the declining monarchy? The political process was gradual and winding and had a fundamental impact on the political-learning process.

in depth how this phenomenon emerges and develops in Spanish America from the 18th century onwards. Contemporary scholars have further analysed it, as I will detail below.

9 As Ulrich Mücke explains it for the Latin American scenario, the creation of an individual does not imply the formation of a separate or self-referential individual, since it is precisely the use of strategies and norms of an epoch that makes the individual a historically socialized subject: "To claim that something is personal, individual and intimate is a figure of speech of nineteenth-century self-documentation which, contrary to what is claimed, does not express individuality, but rather the weight of norms." Mücke, "Introducción," 5. This tension has recently been explored by the American historian Lynn Hunt in *The Revolutionary Self: Social Change and the Emergence of the Modern Individual, 1770-1800* (W.W. Norton & Company, 2025).

10 The expression "*Criollo*" or "Creole" in English refers to European-descendants born in the Americas; François-Xavier Guerra et. al., *Los espacios públicos en Iberoamérica: Ambigüedades y problemas. Siglos XVIII-XIX* (Centro de estudios mexicanos y centroamericanos, 2008), *passim*; Gonzalo Piwonka, "Opinión Pública. Chile," in D*iccionario político y social del mundo iberoamericano. La era de las revoluciones, 1750-1850*, ed. Javier Fernández Sebastián (Fundación Carolina, 2009), 1024–1036.

Dictionaries of the time defined the "public" as belonging to "all the people or neighbours;" relating to "the common people or town," and also "the power, jurisdiction and authority to do something, as opposed to private."[11] Consequently, the private was defined as that which "is carried out in the sight of a few, familiarly and domestically and without formality or ceremony, or that which is particular and personal to each individual," a definition which, despite the transformations of privacy experienced throughout the nineteenth century, remained almost unaffected.[12] But regardless of this nominal dichotomy, the public and the private will turn out to be more intimately intertwined in the context of political praxis.

Early revolutionary intellectuals warned that the success of the republic did not rest solely on institutional development or the strength of innovative legal structures. There was another factor that escaped public attention but had a significant impact on the legal transition to a republic, that is: the condition of its population.[13] In the political language of the time, this was referred to by various terms, each more ambiguous than clear, such as "character" (*carácter*), "mind" (*mente*), "behaviour" (*comportamiento* or *conducta*), "temperament" (*temperamento*) and, more commonly, "customs" (*costumbres*). How was the condition of the Chilean people described in the context of the revolution? The first revolutionary newspaper described it in this way:

> This sad period [of the monarchy] has finally passed away, but we still feel its disastrous influences. Ignorance entered into the plan of oppression. Education was abandoned: stupidity and insensibility took the place in the minds of the people that was due to the feeling of their dignity, to the knowledge of their rights.[14]

According to the revolutionaries, nearly 300 years of Spanish occupation in the Americas had resulted in the stagnation of the population. This is why establishing a republic based on old customs was seen as a crucial issue that needed to be resolved. In order to understand the influence that these customs exerted on public affairs, the first discussions sought to identify the factors that shaped them. In addition to history, the territory and the climate were identified as defining elements:

> Nature, said a wise man, gives the bodies; the weather contributes to the temperament and character; but the government modifies nature and the weather. Nature inspires men with the same passions; the

11 "todo el pueblo o vecinos"; "el común del pueblo o ciudad"; "potestad, jurisdicción y autoridad para hacer alguna cosa, como contrapuesto a privado". *Diccionario de la Real Academia de la Lengua Española* (RAE from now on), 5th edn (Imprenta Real, 1817), 712. All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

12 "se ejecuta a vista de pocos, familiar y domésticamente y sin formalidad ni ceremonia alguna, o lo que es particular y personal de cada uno". RAE 1817, 704. Original translation. The 1884 edition of the same dictionary keeps exactly the same definition.

13 In seeking support for these ideas, Chilean intellectuals drew on the writings of Montesquieu, Rousseau and others, as well as on past republican experiences to understand the factors of success and failure. See Gabriel Cid, *Pensar la revolución. Historia intelectual de la independencia chilena* (Ediciones Universidad Diego Portales, 2019).

14 *La Aurora de Chile*. Prospecto, February 1812.

> strength or weakness of these passions depends on the temperament of each.[15]

But governments were also a determining factor in influencing the condition of the population, as it was stated: "Customs, and even desires and thoughts, should be imprinted with the character of the administration. Among all the causes capable of influencing the human race, none works so remarkably as the government. Men are formed."[16]

As is apparent, the terminological ambiguities consisted, in part, of the link of the expression "passion" (*pasión*) as an integral part of these "behaviours," "character," or "customs," forming a continuum or a semantic relationship. In this regard, it is important to bear in mind that both public space and the experience of privacy (as I will further detail) are relatively new phenomena still in the process of formation in 19th-century Hispanic America. Thus, the expressions "customs" and "passions" lack a specific location, and they play a role in Government Juntas, as well as in interpersonal relationships and in family life, communicating or narrowing the sharp separation between the public and the private.[17] Because of this ubiquity, for the republic to become viable, it was essential to direct government action towards modifying these public and private passions so that they were aligned with the enlightened principles that inspired the institutional edification underway.

Although this may seem novel, in fact, the biopolitical vocation of the state is something that the *criollos* learned from the Bourbon dynasty administration conducted in America from the eighteenth century onwards.[18] This is one of the reasons why many historians claim that the modernization processes in Spanish America began under the Bourbon monarchy and not from the revolution of independence onwards.[19] In this sense, the novelty would lie in the Creole's political direction towards the republican project.

In 1812, the revolutionary friar Camilo Henriquez stated:

> The love of the public good should be the idol of every intelligent man because his individual happiness depends upon public happiness.

15 *El Semanario Republicano*. November 10, 1813.

16 *La Aurora de Chile*. September 24, 1812.

17 Contrary to Habermas's assertion, emotions were not separated from rational discourse but played a key role in it and the formation of a public sphere. I will further develop this idea throughout this article. Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society.* Translated by Thomas Burger with the assistance of Frederick Lawrence (MIT Press, 1989).

18 The idea that the Bourbon administration executed had a "biopolitical" tone has been a widespread interpretation in the literature. Examples can be found in: Santiago Castro-Gómez, "Siglo XVIII: El nacimiento de la biopolítica," *Tabula Rasa* 12 (enero-junio, 2010): 31-45; Hilderman Cardona Rodas, "Colonialidad del poder y biopolítica etnoracial: Virreinato de Nueva Granada en el contexto de las Reformas Borbónicas," *Boletim do Museu Paraense Emílio Goeldi. Ciencias Humanas* 12, no. 2 (2017): 571-94; and for the Chilean case: Patricio Lepe-Carrión, *El Contrato Colonial de Chile*. Ciencia, Racismo y Nación (Editorial Universitaria Abya-Yala, 2017).

19 Alfredo Jocelyn-Holt, La Independencia de Chile. *Tradición, modernidad y mito* (Editorial De Bolsillo, 2009); and Jaime Valenzuela Márquez, *Fiesta, rito y política. Del Chile borbónico al republicano* (DIBAM, 2014).

> Happiness would be fixed on earth if the public and philanthropic spirit dwelt in our bosoms. On the contrary, how sad and hideous would be the aspect of the world if hard selfishness were to occupy all hearts![20]

But while the need to harmonize passions and laws was being acknowledged, the consequences of this imbalance were also being denounced. A year later, the revolutionary project split, causing internal tensions, as another revolutionary newspaper accounted:

> Oh! if only, as governments change, the men who are to live under their rule would also change! If it were impossible to purify their passions as they purify their laws, how easy it would be to produce happy revolutions and to bring the members of a society into harmony! But unfortunately, the rules change, and the men remain the same. Then there is no longer any proportion between the law that commands and the individual who must obey it.[21]

These imbalances became more acute in times of crisis. Once the military problem of independence had been overcome (ca. 1820), the period of institutional organisation began. Between 1823 and 1829, liberal groups took over the leadership of the state and implemented liberalising measures such as granting regional autonomy, extending the franchise, and reducing the Church's property and influence. The conservative opposition, on the other hand, claimed that the "customs" were not in direct proportion to the liberal nature of the measures, a point that also explains the constant riots, and uprisings as well as the weak response of the State to assure political order and stability. So was stated by Diego Portales, a young merchant who was to play a decisive political role in the following decade: "Democracy, so much preached by the deluded, is an absurdity in countries like the Americans, full of vices and where the citizens lack all virtue, as is necessary to establish a true Republic," and he further explained:

> The Republic is the system to adopt, but do you know how I understand it for these countries? A strong, centralizing government, whose men are true models of virtue and patriotism, and thus set the citizens on the path of order and virtue. When they have been moralized, then comes the completely liberal government, free and full of ideals.[22]

Diego Portales (1793–1837) came from an aristocratic family closely involved to the revolutionary movement, but he showed little interest in politics. As a tradesman, he was primarily concerned with the well-being of his businesses. However, the turbulent revolutionary years and the liberal governments that followed in Chile led him to sympathize

20 *La Aurora de Chile*. February 20, 1812.
21 *El Semanario Republicano*. November 20, 1813.
22 Letter from Diego Portales to José Manuel Cea, March 1822 in *Epistolario de don Diego Portales*. Edición aumentada a partir de la recopilación de Ernesto de la Cruz y Guillermo Feliú Cruz (Ediciones Universidad Diego Portales, 2007).

with the country's conservative views and entered politics, hoping to resolve the problems he believed were hindering his businesses: the lack of political order.

Portales' staged diagnosis summed up the position of the conservatives very well, while the liberal faction insisted that liberalizing measures would consequently liberalize passions. Although liberals and conservatives shared the diagnosis that customs have an influence on the development of the republic, they differed on how to proceed with it. The disagreements intensified and civil war broke out in 1829, resulting in the conservatives' hegemony between 1830 and 1861.

In 1831, Congressman and priest José Ignacio Cienfuegos said:

> After a series of years of convulsions, disorders, and bad examples, the country needed a restoring government, and for that purpose, a government that was just as vigorous as it was. The best institutions are useless if they do not rest on customs, and the laws are useless when they do not have their throne in the hearts of the citizens.[23]

Thus, without tuning into the "heart of citizens," the republic would remain fragile. In other words, how people practised their emotions in the realm of their privacy was a matter of significant public concern. A proper emotional training can not only prevent disorder, riots or revolutions, but it also makes the stability of this project possible; this would explain the straightforward tone with which Portales also referred to this: "when education is missing, noble sentiments are also missing and therefore everything is missing."[24]

In 1830, the Chilean-based Venezuelan intellectual Andrés Bello, in his position as editor of the official newspaper, made a consistent point that the "formation of the heart" should cut across the country's inhabitants. In the aftermath of the civil war, banditry, delinquency and robbery multiplied in the countryside, and police efforts were not enough to contain them:

> It is well known that this fatal mania arises from the warlike character, which ignorance allows to run to excess, and that it can never be extinguished until enlightenment and morality take possession of the hearts of the plebeians. Only good customs and an exact knowledge of virtue and honour can keep men out of the path of crime.[25]

According to Bello, construction of the republic would be forced to address the values that sustain it. These values were condensed into the idea that a public morality was fun-

23 *Sesiones de los Cuerpos Legislativos* (SCL from now on), Vol XIX. June 6, 1831, 87.

24 Letter from Diego Portales to Antonio Garfias, Valparaíso. January 28, 1832, in *Epistolario*, ed. Fariña Vicuña, Vol. I. This argument endorses William Reddy's notion of "emotional regime", namely: "The set of normative emotions and the official rituals, practices, and *emotives* that express and inculcate them; a necessary underpinning of any stable political regime." William Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling. A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), 129.

25 *El Araucano*. October 23, 1830.

damental to the structuring of a political order, making passions its object of concern.[26] In 1812, Antonio José de Irisarri, a Guatemalan living in Chile, expressed it clearly:

> We men have in our constitution the principle of good and evil, which are the passions. They, in the good, are the immediate cause of the virtues, and in the bad, they are the origin of the vices; so it is only the cultivated reason of man that makes the passions useful or harmful in society […] The desire for self-aggrandisement and happiness is the passion in the human heart which, suffocating the other passions, weakens and directs them according to the ideas of aggrandisement and happiness which it would have conceived.

He finally added that: "Religion is the powerful spring of passions, which knows how to profit where only evils could be produced. The ideas of an Eternal Being, just and avenging, of hope of reward and fear of punishment, are most likely to withdraw man from vice and incline him to virtue."[27]

The leading political figures in the construction of the Hispanic American republics were fervent Catholics who did not see their political role as separate from their spiritual beliefs. Furthermore, the participation of priests and clergy, whether republican or monarchist, whether from liberal or conservative ranks, stressed the importance of morality in political philosophy and practice.[28] In these circumstances, passions became an issue of utmost relevance for the construction of a political order.

Passions, unlike other references to the sensitive dimension of individuals, such as "feelings" (*sentimientos*) "affections" (*afectos*) or "emotions" (*emociones*), contained an eminently spiritual connotation associated with the "passion of Christ," recounting the suffering experienced by Jesus from the Last Supper to the Crucifixion. Moreover, this spiritual connotation stemmed from the fact that passions were understood as attributes or phenomena experienced by the soul (*alma*) or spirit (*espíritu*) (taken as synonymous), which is why they were considered the domain of the Church, to which the political order had to contribute and favour.[29] The word "passion" comes from the Latin *passio* and the Greek *pathos*, which refer to "suffering" and were understood in practice as interruptions, torments or alterations of judgement.[30] According to this understanding, morality sought, as Irisarri points out, to educate, train, or tame the passions in order to steer them away from

26 The literature linking morality and emotions has been abundant over the last decades. For example, see Carla Bagnoli, *Morality and the Emotions*; J. Prinz, *The Emotional Construction of Morals* (Oxford University Press, 2011); and Michael J. Perry, *Love & Power. The Role of Religion and Morality in American Politics* (Oxford University Press, 1991).

27 *La Aurora de Chile*. October 22, 1812.

28 This is what it is known in Latin America as "Catholic Enlightenment". A good summary can be found in: Mario Góngora, "Aspectos de la Ilustración Católica en el pensamiento y la vida eclesiástica chilena (1770-1814)", *Historia*, 8 (1969).

29 For example, the reflections of Andrés Bello on this matter are relevant for the Chilean case. See: Agustín Zegers Baeza, *Obras Completas de don Andrés Bello. Vol. VII: Opúsculos Literarios y Críticos II* (Impreso por Pedro Ramírez, 1884).

30 RAE, 1817, 645.

vice and towards virtue.[31] Thus, both civil and religious institutions assumed the duty of forming virtuous citizens for the success of the republican project. For this purpose, the Creole intellectual Juan Egaña asked himself: "How can we prevent religious discipline from becoming lax?" He would later answer:

> By not presenting religion as separate from the social order, and as the abode of sadness and reckless privations; by moulding education and all acts of life with its practices; by uniting with religion all great and patriotic ideas that exalt lofty, beneficial, and decorous passions.[32]

Throughout his political career, Egaña insisted on creating the institutional conditions for the state to direct and shape the passions of the population. On two occasions (1811 and 1823), he took responsibility for drafting a constitution to organize the country institutionally. On both occasions, his distinctive hallmark was his emphasis on the moral education of the inhabitants: "ART. 37. All the virtues make a state happy; but the physical and moral condition of every people, and the principles of its constitution, demand greater exertions in the maintenance of some in particular." As we can see, the clarification of that "moral condition" entailed an explicit reference to emotional characteristics:

> Such are, in this Republic, the spirit of fraternity and mutual generosity, in appreciating the virtues and talents of others; in inculcating a spirit of industry, and in directing the luxury of individuals to the public happiness. To form as their national character, justice, temperance, good faith, respect for religion, magistrates, and parents. The law shall always place the rewards of comfort and opinion within the immediate reach of these virtues, to transform them into customs.[33]

In addition to legislation, what means did politicians use to shape virtuous citizens, to moralize the population, or to educate the passions? Given the importance of this task, they employed numerous means, ranging from education, and the promotion of art and literature, public festivities, and many others. A brief overview of the promotion of public entertainment can illustrate the role of privacy in politics.

Since colonial times, public entertainment and festivities have been a means of emotionally bonding the population with the political regime in Hispanic America.[34] Egaña himself, in his 1811 constitutional project, stated the need that: "public and private entertainment should be aimed at inspiring love for the country and the Constitution."[35] The State's agency, therefore, had to cover all aspects of people's lives, including their enter-

31 Relevant work on republicanism and virtue is that of: Vasco Castillo, *La creación de la República. La filosofía pública en Chile* 1810-1830 (LOM Ediciones, 2009).

32 Juan Egaña, *Ocios filosóficos y poéticos en la Quinta de las Delicias* (Manuel Calero, 1829), 59.

33 "Proyecto de Constitución para el Estado de Chile, compuesto por don Juan Egaña en 1811," in *SCL* Vol. I, 214.

34 The work of Jaime Valenzuela Márquez is a strong reference in this regard, especially: *Fiesta, Rito y Política. Del Chile borbónico al republicano* (Centro de Investigaciones Diego Barros Arana, 2014).

35 Proyecto de Constitución de Egaña" in *SCL*, Vol. I, 251.

tainments and leisure, since, in the eyes of the Chilean elites, the common people's entertainment and amusement lacked the appropriate guidelines of public morality.[36]

Between 1818 and 1823, the government of politician and military leader Bernardo O'Higgins (1778–1842) enacted a series of measures prohibiting various forms of entertainment and popular festivals, accusing them of being contrary to public morality. The so-called *fiesta de la challa* was one of them: "Such a barbarous amusement, which is contrary to good morals, customs and public tranquillity in a Catholic people, and which, with the change of its political system, is daily increasing in these respects, must therefore no longer be tolerated." Therefore, it was decided to "forbid it in the present recreations, and order that the *juego de la challa* be not played or allowed to be played, either publicly or privately, during its time in this city, nor in its suburbs and immediate parishes."[37]

During these popular celebrations, as well as in the *chinganas*, *ramadas*, *and fondas*, alcohol consumption was widespread, which was seen not only as a moral problem but also as a productive one:

> The second-class people who go to the *chinganas* leave drunk and half asleep, and cannot work the next day because their bodies are cut up, and the same thing with the farmers in Renca, as this point is the larder of the city and because of the drunkenness the next day they cannot take up the plough. Now what will you say about the demoralization of these people and the results, what can it be; for the moment they are already seen mainly in the plebs.[38]

However, the authorities did not merely ban such activities, but also promoted others that could encourage honest and moral distractions. Along with patriotic celebrations, theatre played an important role in this regard. In 1812, the intellectual and priest Camilo Henríquez stated: "I consider the theatre only as a public school, and in this respect, it is undeniable that the dramatic muse is a great instrument in the hands of politics." He went on to specify:

> Among dramatic productions, tragedy is the most appropriate for free people and the most useful in the present circumstances. It is now that the sublime majesty of Melpomene must fill the stage, breathe noble sentiments, inspire hatred of tyranny, and display all republican dignity![39]

36 Maximiliano Salinas, "Comida, música y humor. La desbordada vida popular," in *Historia de la vida privada*, 87.

37 Ricardo Donoso et. al., *Archivo de don Bernardo O'Higgins.* Vol. XV (Editorial Nascimento, 1946) (ABO from now on). *Gazeta Ministerial de Chile*. Februray 10, 1821, 27.

38 Quoted in Paulina Peralta, *¡Chile tiene fiesta! El origen del 18 de septiembre (1810-1837)* (LOM Ediciones, 2007), 156–57. The *chinganas, fondas* and *ramadas* are traditional places of popular entertainment in Chile, similar to a tavern, where people ate, danced, made music and socialized. They were regularly held on the outskirts of the cities and were attended by lower classes.

39 *La Aurora de Chile.* September 10, 1812. Camilo Henríquez's contribution to theatre were well accounted by Bernardo Subercaseaux and Paula Cuadra, "Camilo Henríquez: teatro, republicanismo y modernidad," *Alpa: revista de artes, letras y filosofía* 43 (2016): 127–41.

During the 1830s, theatre became one of the main vehicles for emotional and moral instruction in the country. In 1832, Andrés Bello emphasised the political importance of theatre:

> it is in the interest of customs and public order to choose the right plays to be performed in the theatre, so that it may be, as it should be, a school of morals and decency, in which, with the attraction of an innocent leisure activity, lessons of virtue and patriotism are inculcated, and the deformity of vicious actions is brought before the eyes of the audience.[40]

Nevertheless, the institutional efforts to replace the population's entertainment did not always have favourable results. Bello himself noted the lack of attendance at the theatre:

> The theatre, which during the civic festivities was visited by a large and lucid attendance, has returned to its customary solitude and melancholy. The eye wanders sadly over the deserted balconies, where, a few days ago, Santiago flaunted the beauty and elegance of his daughters; it contemplates the vacant lenses.[41]

And he asked himself: "What amusements now rival the theatre? What other pleasant objects attract the attention of the public in this populous city? What domestic entertainments, signs of a moral and cultured society, make it so indifferent to the charm of dramatic representations?"[42] Years later, he would answer himself:

> One of the causes that could distract the attendance of the theatre would be the existence of other amusements, if there were any. The *chinganas*, some say; but what can be the attraction of the *chinganas* for the first class of the population of Santiago who, as a theatre lover has said, have always sustained and beautified the dramatic spectacles with their presence? Can it be believed that the families and people we used to see in our theatre have withdrawn from it because of the frequentation of the *chinganas*?[43]

Ironically, one of the persons who preferred the *chinganas* over the theatre was someone from his close social circle: Diego Portales. His predilection for lower-class leisure was highly controversial since they were not in accordance with the entertainments of his social group and status, and even less so with those that corresponded to his position as a political authority. The expectations placed on him as such required him to engage his leisure activities and distractions in line with the values promoted by the republic, but Portales ignored these expectations. When he was offered the position of President of the

40 *El Araucano.* February 19, 1832.
41 Lenses" comes from the Spanish word "lunetas" and it refers to the glasses that people used in theatres to be able to watch the play from a distance.
42 *El Araucano.* September 27, 1833.
43 *El Araucano.* June 12, 1835.

Republic, Portales replied that he was not willing to exchange that position for a "good *zamacueca* dance."[44]

As we can see, the biopolitical vocation of the republic found counteraction from within, suggesting that what happened to privacy was not defined by institutional guidelines alone, but was negotiated by the authority or desire of a rising individuality.[45] How did this negotiation take place? Why did Portales, unlike his contemporaries, choose to limit this institutional intrusion? We can better understand this resistance if we shift our gaze from institutional politics to the mundane realm of everyday life, the domestic and the private.

The Master of Passions

In 1811, during the inauguration of the first national congress, politician Juan Martínez de Rosas addressed the newly elected deputies, stating: "Yes, gentlemen, you will create that shield for the laws, without which they will surely perish. Nothing is more necessary or easier than for you to decide to set an example of public and private virtue in your actions," and he continued:

> if you consider that the magistrate is the book always open to the eyes of all, and the natural teacher of the rest of the people. This conduct, more than all the rules, will define your true character and will make you inviolable in your exalted functions and in your dignified persons. Honesty and virtue will be your refuge from the law.[46]

In this way, Martínez de Rosas outlined that public performance was not only linked to the fulfilment of the duties for which the public office was created, but also served as an example of republican virtue for the rest of the population. The authorities were thus subject to close scrutiny by the political community in their public activities, but also in their private lives.

This was emphasised on several occasions. In 1828, in the context of widespread politicisation of society, a shoemakers' union stepped into a public debate discussing what characteristics a "good magistrate" should have: "The good magistrate must possess in an eminent degree the individual, domestic and social virtues." And they went to specify:

> Individual virtues are prudence and judgement, sobriety, courage, activeness and cleanliness. Under the denomination of domestic virtues belong: economy, paternal love, conjugal love, fraternal love, and the fulfilment of the duties of master and servant. The social virtues are charity, justice, the desire for the public good, and the love of the

44 The *zamacueca* was a popular dance usually danced in *chinganas*.

45 I borrow the term "biopolitics" from Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics. Lectures at the College de France. 1978-1979*, ed. Senellart, trans. Graham Burchell (Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), *passim*.

46 *SCL*, Vol. I, 41.

> country based on the love of the law. To these qualities must be added affability, circumspection, and those gentle and sweet manners imbibed by education, and cultivated in the practical school of the world.[47]

The qualities of magistrates thus became a matter of contestation, since the republic could not rely on leaders who were not subject to implicitly or explicitly established moral codes. Thus, emotional transformation was not only an imperative or an ideal promoted by political leaders to the rest of the population, exempting the former from such a task. On the contrary: inspired by this mandate, many political authorities of the time undertook the enormous task of educating themselves and of reconciling their private emotions and customs with the liberal values they defended in public; a transformation that depended not only on institutional guidelines but also on individual agency.

Referring to the Haitian revolution of 1804, Camilo Henríquez wrote:

> This event seemed unbelievable at the beginning of their revolution. What could be expected from a race of men without education, without enlightenment, without customs? Could there be honour, constancy, and sentiment in a degraded and debased race? To hold their own against the power and art of the arms of France?

But right after he argued:

> But nature made all her children equal: the heart and the mind are capable of equal efforts, equal virtues, and passions in the whole human race. In the end, hatred of chains, the desire for liberty, and a firm and imperturbable resolution overcome all obstacles, led by a leader born to command.[48]

The conflict Henríquez outlines exemplifies the contradiction between, on the one hand, the deep-rooted ideas inherited and updated for centuries, in this case, the perception of Afro-descendant populations as men without education, enlightenment or customs – and, on the other hand, the new enlightened and liberal values, which defended universal principles of liberty, dignity, and equality. In other words, emotions should be matched with customs so that "enlightened feelings" can be practised, or a "liberal heart" can be reached.[49] This brings a "micro-political" dimension of politics to the fore.[50] Political actors found themselves confronted with their own old-fashioned emotions because these were not aligned with the political demands they were collectively constructing, a task that also took place in a small-scale field of action, in the private, in the "eyes of a few." The letter-writing process of these political figures attest the tensions involved in

47 *El Mercurio*. November 29, 1828.

48 *La Aurora de Chile*. February 13, 1812.

49 These expressions can be found in Bernardo O'Higgins's letters.

50 I borrow this concept from the authors Guattari and Rolnik who, from the perspectives of philosophy and psychoanalysis, try to unveil the mutual interaction between what they call micro and macro politics. Félix Guattari and Suely Rolnik, *Micropolítica. Cartografías del deseo* (Traficantes de Sueños, 2006).

this emotional transformation. Let us take the case of Bernardo O'Higgins and Diego Portales as examples.

Throughout Bernardo O'Higgins's letters, it is possible to perceive a noteworthy capacity for self-observation that allowed him not only to "navigate" his emotions (to take William Reddy's expression) but especially to work upon them:

> But these feelings of irritation, I am happy to confess, did not last long. I began to reflect on the real cause of my anger and I concluded to attribute it only to my hurt vanity, for I realized that my disgust stemmed from the idea that by not being appointed colonel of my regiment, I would be looked down upon by my own tenants and the inhabitants of the neighbourhood.[51]

The private sphere has a capacity to enable an emotional transformation whose impact extends beyond the private or personal, influencing the public sphere. After being deposed from the political high command in 1823 and going into self-exile in Peru, he wrote: "I keep only my honour, the memory of the good I achieved in my actions, and no passion stirs me; before defeating my enemies, I learned to defeat myself."[52] Furthermore, privacy will prove to be more efficient for a transformation of this kind, given that it occurs in the "eye of a few," because it takes place within a context of trust and protection, far from the belligerence and conflict of the public political space: "Already I begin to enjoy all the tranquillity which individual independence can give, and being far from ungrateful and cowardly people," said O'Higgins in Perú in 1823.[53]

However, this transformation was closely linked to Enlightenment ideas: "May God reward my lord father and benefactor for the liberal heart he has had in nurturing and educating me to the age where I could earn my living," wrote O'Higgins.[54] Years later, he further clarified the connection between the individual emotional transformation and the Republican project: "We are about to enter a new period devoted to stability and politics. If Chile is to be a Republic, as our oaths demand and as the vote of nature indicated by the configuration and wealth that distinguishes it […] it is necessary that we flee from those cold calculators who crave monarchism." And he concluded: "How difficult it is, my friend, to uproot old habits! Enlightened men like you, with your privileged reason and judgement, are the only ones who can convince and persuade."[55] Thus, O'Higgins waged a struggle against behaviours, thoughts, and emotions within himself that prevented him from achieving a harmonious balance between emotions and the enlightenment ideals.

51 Letter from Bernardo O'Higgins to Juan Mackenna, Canteras, January 1811, in *Epistolario*, ed. Gómez y Ocaranza. Vol. I.

52 Letter from Bernardo O'Higgins to Juan Martín de Pueyrredón, Lima, November 15, 1823, in *Epistolario de don Bernardo O'Higgins Riquelme*, eds. Alfredo Gómez Alcorta and Francisco José Ocaranza Bosio, Vol. I (Universidad Bernardo O'Higgins, 2011).

53 Letter from Bernardo O'Higgins to José de San Martín, Lima, August 9, 1823, in *Epistolario*, ed. Gómez and Ocaranza, Vol. I.

54 Letter from Bernardo O'Higgins to Ambrosio O'Higgins, Cádiz, January 8, 1801, in *Epistolario*, ed. Gómez and Ocaranza, Vol. I.

55 Letter from Bernardo O'Higgins to José Gaspar Marín, Santiago, October 18, 1821, in *Epistolario*, ed. Gómez and Ocaranza, Vol. I.

Despite the difficulties, O'Higgins took on Juan Martínez de Rozas's recommendation at the inauguration of the First National Congress in 1811: to become an example of public but also private virtue.

The same difficulty to align emotions and ideals appear a few years later in Diego Portales's letters. In 1829, he wrote: "I feel a strong repugnance to deal with public affairs, whose turn causes disgust and despair: so that when I have to stop for a while to write about them out of necessity, I do so with inexplicable violence and throwing down my pen at every turn." And then he states: "No sacrifice I make to be a good Chilean costs me more than this one."[56]

Embracing the responsibilities associated with public office brought politicians into personal conflict with their own desires. But for Portales, unlike O'Higgins, this conflict did not result in him completely sacrificing the political positions he held, but rather in a negotiation:

> You cannot imagine the hatred I have for public affairs, and the discomfort I feel at hearing people talk about it; whether this is the effect of fatigue or of the selfishness that cannot be separated from man, or whether it is due to my peculiarity in fearing to see things as they are; in short, whatever it may be, the fact is that I have this aversion, which I congratulate myself on and which others criticize.[57]

Portales was emphatic in distinguishing his private business from his public affairs. His political career (between 1827 and 1837) was constantly interrupted by a series of intervals in which Portales excused himself from his public responsibilities due to his "strong repugnance to deal with public affairs."[58] On several occasions, he expressed his appreciation for this autonomy: "I could never resign myself to the loss of my independence, which has always been my most precious possession."[59] However, the pressures to resume his duties were frequent, to the point of provoking furious reactions from him:

> Tell those idiots who believe that with me there can only be government and order, that I am far from thinking that way, and that if one day I grabbed my balls and took up a stick to bring peace to the coun-

56 Letter from Diego Portales to Francisco Antonio Elizalde, Valparaíso, August 11, 1829, in *Epistolario*, ed. Fariña Vicuña, Vol. I.

57 Letter from Diego Portales to Joaquín Tocornal. Valparaíso, July 16, 1832, in *Epistolario*, ed. Fariña Vicuña, Vol. I.

58 Between 1833 and 1835 Diego Portales resigned from public office and retired to Valparaíso to devote himself to his business, although he did assume the post of Governor of Valparaíso during this period. This trait has been interpreted by his admirers as a sign of his lack of ambition for power, just as they see his public performance as a renunciation of his private interests for the higher interests of the homeland. See: Francisco Antonio Encina, *Portales*. Tomo I (Editorial Nascimento, 1964).

59 Letter from Diego Portales to J. Vicente Bustillos. Valparaiso, November 8, 1831, in *Epistolario*, ed. Fariña Vicuña, Vol. I.

> try, it was only so that the bastards and whores of Santiago would let me work in peace.[60]

As we can see, emotions played an important role in Diego Portales' distinction between the public and the private. Utilizing emotions such as "disgust" (*asco*), "hatred" (*odio*), "repugnance" (*repugnancia*), "fatigue" (*fatiga*), and even "humiliation" (*humillación*) Portales delimited his engagement in public affairs, while by mobilizing emotions such as "pleasure" (*placer* or *agrado*) and "tranquillity" (*tranquilidad*), he described what he experienced in his private dimension. In doing so, Portales made a negotiation with the moral standards of his time. While accepting the behavioural requirements associated with the public office he held, he zealously advocated a life free from these requirements: a private one. The conflict that arose from his desire to protect his privacy shows that privacy was an unusual experience for politicians, since, as we have seen, they were expected to devote themselves entirely to their office and to harmonize them under the same moral scheme. Instead, Portales claimed: "I have learnt that I must spend the few years I have left in the life I enjoy most, and to achieve this I must distance myself as far as possible from government and public affairs." Nonetheless:

> the very appearance or retention of the title of Minister causes me great difficulty, as it suggests that I am in close communication with the Government. As a minister, even if only in name, I am the victim of frequent humiliating attacks. Visitors kick me in the stomach and consultations make me sleepy, depriving me of the comfort of doing what I want in my own home.[61]

In fact, the privacy that Portales guarded lacked "formality or ceremony," according to the nominal definition, at least of the formalities dictated by public performance, such as prudence, patriotism, and sensibility. Portales was in his private life what he could not be in public: thrown into the worldly pleasures of alcohol, love scandals, and exuberant partying, as demonstrated by his interest in attending *chinganas* rather than the theatre.[62]

Diego Portales' distinction between the public and the private represents a turning point in the history of privacy in Chilean politics. While O'Higgins, as well as other contemporary political leaders, moulded their privacy according to enlightened principles, Portales, facing the same principles and imperatives, claimed autonomy as a sign of his individuality. That slight yet fundamental difference makes a key distinctive element between two different generations in the *longue dureé* of privacy in nineteenth-century Chile, which would eventually pave the way for the consolidation of the distinction between the public and the private by the end of the century. It comes, then, as no surprise that when analysing bourgeois culture at the end of nineteenth century, the historian

60 Letter from Diego Portales to Antonio Garfias. December 10, 1831, in *Epistolario,* ed. Fariña Vicuña, Vol. I.

61 Letter from Diego Portales to Antonio Garfias. Valparaiso, March 13, 1832, in *Epistolario,* ed. Fariña Vicuña, Vol. I.

62 Portales' private life has been the subject of extensive reflection and attempts to understand it. For example, Sergio Villalobos, *Portales, una falsificación histórica* (Editorial Universitaria, 1989); and Alfredo Jocelyn-Holt, *El peso de la noche. Nuestra frágil fortaleza histórica* (Editorial de Bolsillo, 2009).

Peter Gay identifies hypocrisy as a defining characteristic.[63] At the same time, the case of Portales marks the first step towards reducing politics' hegemony over people's privacy. With the consolidation of the public-private distinction by the end of the century, politics will become just one reference in shaping privacy, rather than the main one as it was for O'Higgins and his generation.

Final Considerations

What we have seen so far is important for rethinking the fields of action of politics in the first half of the nineteenth century in Chile. If the public sphere always referred to politics, politics, on the other hand, did not only refer to the public sphere but managed to go beyond it. As a consequence, the contention or conquest of citizens' privacy became another, and fundamental, purpose of the newly created institutions. Linking privacy with the characteristics of the republic suspended any possibility of experiencing a privacy that was autonomous or impervious to political events.

In this regard, passions were channels of communication between the two dimensions, and acting on them made it possible to influence both the public and private spheres. Precisely for this reason, the establishment of a public morality was closely linked to the construction of a public order, in this case with republican characteristics.

The self-educational emotional processes undertaken by O'Higgins and Portales reveal at least three relevant issues regarding privacy in the early decades of the nineteenth century. The first is that institutional action on citizens' privacy followed guidelines required for the construction and consolidation of a republican system. Moreover, the success of these figures consisted precisely in a coordination between their individual virtuous aspirations and those of the country. To this end, these figures, as representatives of the state, exercised intense micro-political agency over their own private emotions as one of the necessary tasks in the political project underway.[64] In other words, privacy became yet another field of political action.

Secondly, the nineteenth century witnessed a fundamental shift in ways of feeling precisely because of the institutional transformations that Western modernity underwent. Figures such as O'Higgins and Portales were both producers and products of this change. The urgent need to "uproot habits" and promote others within the framework of a republican project supports the argument of the historian and anthropologist William Reddy, who argues that regimes contain and are sustained by a normative emotional scheme, which he calls the "emotional regime."[65] Nevertheless, this emotional transformation of privacy did not come only "from above" or from an institutional action, but also from daily and everyday actions, as those undertaken by these politicians.

63 Peter Gay, *The Bourgeois Experience, Victoria to Freud*. Vol. I: The Education of the Senses (W.W. Norton & Company, 1999), 404–10.

64 This can also be seen in the case of the memoirs of the Peruvian José Rufino Echeñique, described by Ulrich Mücke and Marcel Velázquez in: *Autobiografía del Perú republicano. Ensayos sobre historia y la narrativa del yo* (Biblioteca Nacional del Perú, 2015), 74–82.

65 Reddy, *The Navigation*, 124–29.

Finally, privacy in Chile was a gradual process, especially for politicians. Faced with the need to build models of republican virtue, these politicians were constantly besieged by the behavioural imperatives demanded by the republic. In this respect, the case of Diego Portales represents a milestone in the emergence of an individuality that negotiates the fields of action of the public sphere and manages to cushion the institutional formalities. Of course, not without conflict.

Considering the heuristic zones of privacy proposed by the historian Mette Birkedal Bruun, we can see that in Chile the sovereignty of these zones was administered by the interests of the Republic, while the case of Diego Portales represented a first experience of the restriction of institutional access to privacy.[66]

How did the private sphere expand in the nineteenth century? What role did emotions play in creating the public-private divide? Did the secularization policies of the late nineteenth century have an impact on this? How did these emotional and cultural changes affect the institutional structure of the Republic? All these questions remain unanswered for the time being. Hopefully not for long.

66 Mette Birkedal Bruun, "Towards an Approach to Early Modern Privacy: The Retirement of the Great Condé", in Green, Nørgaard, and Bruun, *Early Modern Privacy*, 20–24.

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