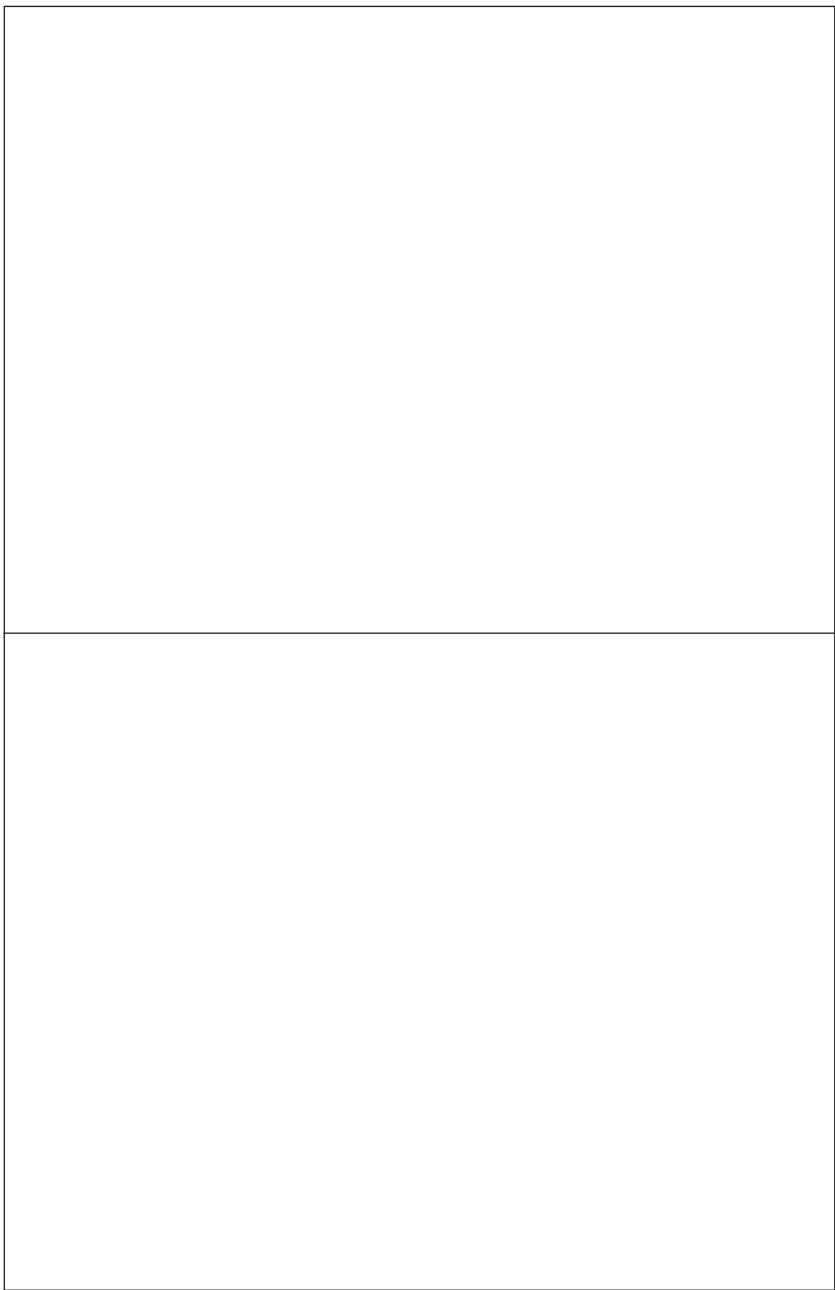


Christoph Krönke

Governmental Paternalism



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The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available on the Internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>

ISBN 978-3-8487-4111-3 (Print)
 978-3-8452-8420-0 (ePDF)

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978-3-8487-4111-3 (Print)
 978-3-8452-8420-0 (ePDF)

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Krönke, Christoph
Governmental Paternalism
Christoph Krönke
106 p.

ISBN 978-3-8487-4111-3 (Print)
 978-3-8452-8420-0 (ePDF)

1st Edition 2018

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Contents

Preface	7
Governmental Paternalism: Anachronism or Future Model of Enhancing Life?	9
Protective Governmental Paternalism: “Data Paternalism”	15
I. What is Protective Governmental Paternalism?	18
1. Governmental Paternalism	18
2. Protective Governmental Paternalism	22
3. Data Paternalism as an Example of Protective Paternalism	23
II. Phenomenology of Protective Paternalism in the GDPR and ePD	26
1. Invasive Paternalism	26
a) Prohibition Principle and Need for Formality	26
b) “Freely Given” Consent and the Necessity Requirement	28
c) Processing of Sensitive Personal Data and “Profiling”	30
2. Libertarian Paternalism	32
a) Privacy by Default	33
b) Providing Information	34
III. Data Paternalism as a Fundamental Rights Problem	36
1. A Specific Fundamental Right Against Data Paternalism?	39
a) Right to Disclose Personal Data	39
b) Right to Assess the Disclosure of Personal Data	39
d) Conclusion	45
2. Data Paternalism as Interference with Fundamental Rights	46
a) Invasive Paternalism	47
aa) Formal Consent Requirements	47
bb) Necessity Requirement	48
b) Libertarian Paternalism	48
aa) Privacy by Default	48
bb) Providing Information	49

IV. Justifying Data Paternalism	51
1. Specific Reasons for Data Paternalism	51
a) General Systematic Deficits of Human Decision Making?	51
b) Specific and Severe Threats to Personal Autonomy	54
2. Illuminating the Objective of Data Protection	55
3. Balancing Personal Autonomy and Data Protection	58
a) Citizen-State-Relations	58
b) Citizen-Citizen-Relations	59
V. Conclusion	62
Educational Governmental Paternalism: “Buying Social Responsibility”	65
I. What is Educational Governmental Paternalism?	68
1. Educational Governmental Paternalism	68
2. “Buying Social” as an Example of Educational Paternalism	72
II. Phenomenology of Educational Paternalism in the PPD	74
1. Strict “Must-Have” Requirements	75
a) Social Irresponsibility as a Ground for Exclusion	75
b) Social Contract Performance Conditions	76
c) Social Requirements in Technical Specifications	78
2. Softer “Nice-to-Have” Requirements	79
3. General Limitations of Social Requirements under the PPD	80
III. “Buying Social” – A Specific Fundamental Rights Problem?	81
1. Limiting the Tenderer’s Freedom of Occupation	81
2. Specific Protection Against “Expressive” Content of Law?	84
3. Protection Against Indirect Effects of “Expressive” Law?	87
4. Education as Justification for Interferences?	88
5. Two Specific Constitutional Requirements	93
a) Relevance of a Broad-Based Consensus	94
b) Consistency Principle	95
IV. Testing the Concept of “Buying Social”	96
1. More and Less Morality	96
2. Requirement of a Broad-Based Consensus	97
3. Consistency of “Buying Social”	99
V. Conclusion	102
Epilogue: The Future of Governmental Paternalism	105

Preface

This book is the result of my work as an Early Career Scholar of the international and interdisciplinary *Enhancing Life Project* (ELP), launched by the University of Chicago in collaboration with the Ruhr University Bochum, and supported by a grant from the John Templeton Foundation. The ELP enabled me to conduct independent research on my individual project from October 2015 to December 2016.

The overall aim of the ELP was to comprehensively explore the rich but widely unexamined aspirations of human beings that move persons and communities into the future.¹ 35 scholars from diverse academic backgrounds (Christian theology, religious studies, anthropology, communications and media studies, history, law, medicine, philosophy, political science, social work, and sociology) and from different countries and cultural contexts (including Germany, Iraq, Israel, Taiwan, the United Kingdom, and the United States) were supported.² During three joint seminars in Banff, Canada (2015), Berlin, Germany (2016) and Chicago, United States (2017), I had the opportunity to exchange and collaborate with my fellow scholars and focus on our shared concern, i.e. developing the academic field of *Enhancing Life Studies* (ELS).

With my individual project on *Governmental Paternalism* I tried to find an answer to the big question “What is enhancing life?” by asking another question: *Who* should decide what an enhanced life actually is? Is it the government or is it the individual? For a (radical) libertarian, the answer would be simple. The individual gets to decide. If he or she wants to drink, smoke, gamble, it’s up to him or her to do so. But if you are a liberal or hold moderate political views, you would probably say that the government has certain responsibilities with respect to the wellbeing of its citizens.

I would like to thank my mentor *Martin Burgi*, who advised me to apply for the ELP in the first place, and – of course – the entire ELP team, including its Principal Investigators, *Günter Thomas* and *William Schwei-*

1 See <http://enhancinglife.uchicago.edu/about/introduction-the-big-questions> for a detailed project description.

2 Cf. <http://enhancinglife.uchicago.edu/about>.

Preface

ker, as well as *Sara Bigger* (Project Director), *Markus Höfner* (Project Coordinator), *Heike Springhart* (Project Consultant) and all my fellow scholars for making everything happen. The ELP has truly enhanced my personal and academic life.

Christoph Krönke

Munich, June 2017

Governmental Paternalism: Anachronism or Future Model of Enhancing Life?

Paternalism? Seriously? Why would anyone in our assumingly liberal Western societies appreciate a government that patronizes its citizens, be it for their own good? In the 21st century, indeed, writing a book on “Governmental Paternalism”, a term with strongly pejorative (even sexist?) overtones, does call for some explanation – at least if governmental paternalism is put in context with the enhancement of human life.

For quite a long time, the idea of a “father” (or “mother”) State that takes care of his (or her) citizens and provides protection, regardless of and even against their actual will, was not much appreciated. *Immanuel Kant* drastically wrote in 1793 that a “fatherly government (*imperium paternale*)” renders its citizens as “underage children” who were “not able to distinguish what is truly good or bad for them”; hence, *Kant* argued, governmental paternalism was “the greatest possible despotism”.³ Accordingly, the first paternalism debate, for instance, in German legal scholarship, culminating in the 1990s, was a very critical one and focused on the question of whether protecting human beings from themselves was permissible in light of their fundamental human rights.⁴ Most legal scholars agreed that governmental paternalism had to be limited to exceptional cases, such as protecting people from gross self-harming conduct (e.g. from gambling or “walking and texting”) or the protection of minors (e.g. from skin cancer, by way of indoor UV tanning restrictions) and of mentally disordered people who do not have the ability to fully understand and

3 *Kant*, Über den Gemeinspruch: Das mag in der Theorie richtig sein, taugt aber nicht für die Praxis (1793), in: Riedel (ed.), *Immanuel Kant, Schriften zur Geschichtsphilosophie*, 2001, page 118 (137) (translated by the author).

4 See *von Münch*, Grundrechtsschutz gegen sich selbst, in: FS Ipsen, 1977, pages 113-128; *Doehring*, Die Gesunderhaltung des Menschen im Spannungsverhältnis zwischen Staatsfürsorge und Individualentscheidung, in: FS Zeidler II, 1987, pages 1553-1565; *Hillgruber*, Der Schutz des Menschen vor sich selbst, 1992; *Littwin*, Grundrechtsschutz gegen sich selbst, 1993; *Fischer*, Die Zulässigkeit aufgedrängten staatlichen Schutzes vor Selbstschädigung, 1997; *Schwabe*, Der Schutz des Menschen vor sich selbst, JZ 1998, pages 66 *et seq.*; *Möller*, Paternalismus und Persönlichkeitsrecht, 2005.

evaluate the consequences of their actions. In general, however, the notion of governmental paternalism had a rather negative connotation.

It was not until recently that more and more scholars recognized the truly positive aspects of governmental paternalism, particularly in Anglo-Saxon jurisprudence. The proponents of so-called “libertarian paternalism”⁵ make arguments on the basis of behavioural economics research, which reveals that people systematically tend to make “bad decisions” due to the structural lack of attention, information, cognitive abilities and self-control. They argue that governments should be allowed to smoothly move (“nudge”) and guide its citizens “in a direction that will make their lives better” by way of a self-conscious governmental “choice architecture”.⁶ In their famous book on “nudging”, *Richard Thaler* and *Cass Sunstein* argued that influencing people’s behaviour by a well-designed choice architecture does not burden people who want to exercise their freedom of

5 For a historical reconstruction of the term see *Thaler*, *Misbehaving: The Making of Behavioral Economics*, 2015, pages 322 *et seq.*

6 Cf. *Thaler/Sunstein*, *Nudge – Improving Decisions About Health, Wealth and Happiness*, 2008, pages 5-6. The theories developed in this book received remarkable attention among legal scholars. For the discussion in German see *Eidenmüller*, *Effizienz als Rechtsprinzip – Möglichkeiten und Grenzen der ökonomischen Analyse des Rechts*, 1995, pages 358 *et seq.*; *id.*, *Liberaler Paternalismus*, *JZ* 2011, pages 814 *et seq.*; *van Aaken*, „Rational Choice“ in der Rechtswissenschaft – Zum Stellenwert der ökonomischen Theorie im Recht, 2003, pages 71 *et seq.*; *id.*, *Begrenzte Rationalität und Paternalismusgefahr: Das Prinzip des schonendsten Paternalismus*, in: *Anderheiden/Bürkli/Heinig/Kirste/Seelmann* (ed.), *Paternalismus und Recht*, 2006, pages 109 *et seq.*; *Englerth*, *Vom Wert des Rauchens und der Rückkehr des Idioten – Paternalismus als Antwort auf beschränkte Rationalität?*, in: *Engel/Englerth/Lüdemann/Spiecker* gen. *Döhmman* (ed.), *Recht und Verhalten – Beiträge zu Behavioral Law and Economics*, 2007, pages 231 *et seq.*; *Schuppert*, *Zwischen Freiheit und Bevormundung*, in: *FS Schmidt-Jortzig*, 2011, pages 291 *et seq.*; *Smeddinck*, *Regulieren durch „Anstoßen“. Nachhaltiger Konsum durch gemeinwohlverträgliche Gestaltung von Entscheidungssituationen?*, *Die Verwaltung* 44 (2011), pages 375 *et seq.*; *id.*, *Der Nudge-Ansatz – eine Möglichkeit, wirksam zu regieren?*, *ZRP* 2014, pages 245 *et seq.*; *Kirchhof*, *Contra: Nudging – schwierige Fragen nach Recht, Freiheit und Gesellschaft*, *RuP* 2015, pages 85 *et seq.*; *id.*, *Nudging – zu den rechtlichen Grenzen informalen Verwaltens*, *ZRP* 2015, pages 136 *et seq.*; *Wolff*, *Eine Annäherung an das Nudge-Konzept nach Richard H. Thaler und Cass R. Sunstein aus rechtswissenschaftlicher Sicht*, *Rechtswissenschaft* 2015, pages 194 *et seq.* Moreover, several German scholars who publish regularly on the well-known *Verfassungsblog* organized a major conference on “Choice Architecture in Democracy” in January 2015, the contributions to which are available on <http://verfassungsblog.de/category/focus/choice-architecture-nudging-en/>.

choice, that their concept of paternalism is “liberty-preserving”.⁷ For example: If a food services director for a public cafeteria decides to (merely) change the order and arrangement of food items (and not to remove any of them) for the purpose of making people choose healthier food (e.g. fruits and vegetables instead of candy and chocolate bars) – is he or she actually restricting people’s freedom to buy candy and chocolate bars? One has to admit that this “new” concept of governmental paternalism does not seem to be that patronizing anymore.

In fact, all of these forms of *protective* governmental paternalism can be perceived as a tightrope walk between the aim of enhancing people’s lives on the one hand and their right to personal autonomy in private life on the other hand. The first part of this book will be dedicated to describing and analysing this balancing act from a legal point of view.

There is yet another pattern of regulation that falls within the term governmental paternalism. Several EU directives provide, for example, that discrimination based on gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion, belief, racial or ethnical origin is prohibited in the context of professional or commercial transactions related to the access of goods or services.⁸ In Germany, the legislation implementing these directives (in particular: the General Equal Treatment Act) provoked stark criticism in legal scholarship – maybe not so much because of the interference with the rights of the people and companies addressed by those rules, but rather because of the strategic goal of the regulation to establish a general social environment in which discrimination is “not ok”.⁹ Proposals for bans of

7 Cf. *Thaler/Sunstein*, Nudge. Improving Decisions About Health, Wealth and Happiness, 2008, pages 24-25.

8 There are four major EU directives in the field of anti-discrimination: Council Directive 2000/43/EC of 29 June 2000 implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin; Council Directive 2000/78/EC of 27 November 2000 establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation; Council Directive 2004/113/EC of 13 December 2004 implementing the principle of equal treatment between men and women in the access to and supply of goods and services; Directive 2006/54/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation (recast).

9 Cf. *Britz*, Diskriminierungsschutz und Privatautonomie, VVDStRL 64 (2005), page 355 (393 *et seq.*); *Volkman*, Darf der Staat seine Bürger erziehen?, 2012, pages 15-16.