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Paul Levy writes about the death of privacy.

- 1 Privacy is one of the major battlegrounds between individual and corporation. It is a war taking place largely without the conscious and active participation of the majority of humanity, most of whom are sleepwalking into the loss of most of their privacy. At the heart of many of the large corporations is a zealous wish for the walls of individual privacy to come crashing down. These zealots largely claim that this removal of privacy will heal the world by joining us all together in a new family of pure openness. Heaven on earth. 5
- 2 One might imagine that being more open with each other might be a benevolent thing in the spiritual development of humanity. When we put up walls to keep others out, we also brick ourselves in. Our desire for privacy divides whereas openness and sharing bind us all together in ways that enhance the notion of the linked human family. Privacy disconnects whereas openness connects. 10
- 3 Privacy is not just along a line of openness and closedness. It is not only about what is hidden or revealed. Privacy is also connected to our inner life. Privacy is part of our inner health and well-being. Our wish for it is there for a reason. Sometimes our inner world is a place where things seem even hidden from us, and only reveal themselves at certain times. Our private space is often sacred because it is of priceless value, special and often something we keep close to our hearts. We often keep things secret because they are fragile or because we intuitively know they are brewing inside us. Sometimes we suppress things from ourselves in order to deal with them when we are more able. If you expose something too quickly to the light, it will not develop – try it with some camera film. If you take something too quickly out of the oven, it will not rise. 15 20
- 4 Privacy is often sacred to us, because it guards precious and fragile aspects of our lives, our families and deeper parts of our selves that need to develop over longer periods which will be diminished or even destroyed in too much light. Much of our privacy is part of our mystery, our story over years that needs time to reveal and be told. Too many clues and the novel is ruined, the story spoiled. At work, good and innovative ideas often develop in quiet, out of public scrutiny. 25
- 5 We also put things into our private realm because we want to try to forget them. Forgetting creates space, at least in our immediate consciousness for newness, for a new page. It is like clearing the decks – we do not need them to be too glaringly available on our line of time. Clumsy social media platforms refuse to allow us to put our past into real privacy, archiving rather than deleting, and, even worse, putting them onto storylines and timelines that constantly bring our wish-to-be-forgotten memories into, not only our awareness, but also the awareness of the public. 30
- 6 One way this is maintained is through a development in recent years that creates a kind of tiredness in people to resist or undo it. It is the notion that the new ‘default’ state of our lives is public, rather than private. It is as if we are now sold houses with the windows and doors wide open and a ‘come on in’ sign posted at the gate, with the keys hard to get from the agent. It is for us to shut and lock the doors and close the curtains. And, as soon, as we make any kind of change – perhaps add a new room, the default of public and open, reasserts itself and we have to lock it all up again. And, whenever we decide to do that, we are asked several times at each stage: “Are you sure”? “Are you really sure”? And even when we do delete or try to set to private, the search engines forget a lot more slowly, if at all. Even when we lock the door and bolt it, various adverts start to fly through the letter 35 40

- box. If we say yes to any of those and fail to tick the right (and very tiny) 'no' box, the openness defaults all start up again. And again. And again. It becomes less tiring, easier to just keep the doors open. 45
- 7 Many corporations and social media zealots are attempting to link openness with a kind of moral duty in all of us to heal humanity by taking down the walls that divide us – the walls of privacy. These deliberately try to link privacy with being anti-social. Their prime motive of course, not very well hidden, is to mine our behaviour for data so that their virtual algorithms can target us with adverts and thus raise revenue for the corporation's shareholders. Openness can feel very freeing. It can bring the walls that make us feel isolated crashing down. We get more immediate feedback. We get more likes. More connected buzz. And we also get rewarded with more always-on connection popularity. Suddenly we have strangers on the other side of the world loving our family photographs. 50 55
- 8 But we are also squandering something precious here and losing consciousness of the value of our sacred space – not only to ourselves, but also to the rest of humanity. Pauses and silences are important. Space is as important as stuff. When we allow things to brew quietly and secretly inside of us, often over years, they deepen and refine, they mature and develop charisma. They need privacy. They need to be out of harsh glare. This gets lost if exposed too quickly. Also when we keep our story private, when we finally do decide to tell it to another, it can become healing for both them and us. Our stories are powerful and the constant sharing of them and even stealing of them by corporations (whom we unwittingly give permission to use them) diminishes their power, dilutes them, and even as we increase the number of connections, the quality of them degrades. 60 65
- 9 Conscious privacy strengthens your will power by improving the way you value yourself. It helps you regain the sense of sacredness and unique value you have. Claiming privacy can be a gesture of self-worth. By not putting everything on view, you do not deny the world, you deny the corporation. By choosing consciously in the moment with your own will what you share and don't share, actually is a gesture of value to, and faith in the world. Our public 'virtual' spaces become less cluttered, simpler, cleaner, and we can start to see each other as we really are, in terms of our essence, not in terms of our mess. Instead of filling up an increasingly littered yard, you start to organise your attic or tidy up your bedroom. 70
- 10 Privacy divides us from each other. Conscious privacy connects in ways we cannot imagine. For then we connect out of a sense of uniqueness and importance for each other, renewed in each moment of sharing. This comes from connecting soul to soul, not via fingertips. Privacy is going to be the new gold. 75