



A Critical Study of Four Definitions of Privacy From The Viewpoint of Western Ethics

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Abstract

This article addresses four definitions of privacy. Initially, the literal meaning of privacy is mentioned; It then discusses the meaning of the term “privacy” in Ethics. The first meaning is the right to be alone and free. The second meaning of privacy is informational and is divided into two types: one is the definition based on expectation and another is a definition based on the state of awareness. The third type is the definition that defines privacy based on control. In this paper, these definitions are reviewed one by one and the limitations noted by others are expressed and evaluated. The fourth type is a multi-dimensional or clustered definition. According to this definition, we should define privacy on a descriptive rather than a normative basis and avoid using any normative concept in its definition. According to this kind of definition, we can break the concept of privacy into three independent components. These three elements are secrecy, anonymity, and loneliness. Although this definition is not devoid of deficits, it is the most comprehensive one in this article because it refers to more privacy-related features



Keywords

Privacy, the right to loneliness, control, anonymity, secrecy, cluster definition.

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Introduction

The purpose of this article is to review the most well-known definitions of privacy. In addition, a critical review of each of these definitions has been given according to the author's point of view, with reference to the most important critiques below each. The right to privacy as a right to loneliness, as a right to private information, as a right to control, and as a combination of three rights: secrecy, solitude, anonymity, are four definitions that will be explained and reviewed in this article.

Summary

The first definition explains privacy as the right to be alone and free. This definition has fundamental drawbacks: The main drawbacks of this definition are violations that indicate that this is not a comprehensive definition. Sometimes people write their memories in a diary and leave them somewhere.

The second definition of privacy is referring to personal information, which itself is of two types, sometimes defined by expectation and sometimes by a state of unconsciousness. In the first type, privacy is the realm of the life of any person which he typically and commonly or with prior notice expects others to not access without his or her consent, or that they not observe or monitor that territory or invade it in any other way. The second type of information privacy is based on a state of unconsciousness. Parent says privacy is the condition of not having undocumented personal knowledge about someone which is obtained through others. The main drawback of this definition is that it does not apply to what is referred to as physical or spatial privacy. This is not a comprehensive definition and merely emphasizes on information privacy. It does not include the domain of the right to loneliness and freedom.

The third type is a definition based on control. A variety of definitions fall into this category. Charles Fried, Alan Westin, Adam Moore, and Julie Inness are among those who have defined privacy by control. Julie Inness defines privacy as "control over information about oneself, access to oneself, or one's intimate decisions about one's own actions." Numerous issues regarding this definition have been mentioned in sources related to the meaning of privacy. One of the drawbacks is mentioned by James Moore. He argues that which matters is the use of information, not control over information. One of the most basic drawbacks to some of these kinds of definitions is that they do not include the two domains of loneliness and access to locative privacy.

The fourth type of privacy definition is seen as multifaceted or clustered.

Ruth Gavison believes that the concept of privacy can be broken down into three independent components. These three elements are secrecy, anonymity, and solitude. The first drawback is that this definition does not refer to the relations of friendship and social familiarity between individuals. Many of the social relationships formed between people, including marital and amicable relationships and other acquaintances come under privacy. This area can be called friendship and intimacy, which Julie Inness calls the root of the meaning of privacy, interpreting it as a combination of love, affection, and caring for others. The second drawback is that this definition does not refer to cases of non-interference in the affairs of others. But at the same time, this is the most comprehensive definition to date, because it refers to most of the aspects of privacy.

The most inspiring insight that one can draw from this definition is that privacy can be presented in a multi-faceted way in which points to the different and heterogeneous aspects of the definition of privacy. It seems possible to achieve such a definition using multifaceted definitions, but these definitions should be selected and arranged in a way that avoids the aforementioned problems.

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