

Confidentiality: An ethical duty that prevents certain people from sharing your information with others, unless they have your permission or a valid reason.

Examples: A doctor cannot tell your neighbor that you have been diagnosed with a disease; you can tell whomever you wish. But the doctor can tell a pharmacist to fill a prescription for a drug known to treat that cancer without your permission, or tell nurses, other doctors, and hospital employees for valid reasons.

Privacy: Either, 1) A right to freedom from intrusion into your personal matters, and information about you that helps you to define who you are. Or, 2) An ethical duty of others to refrain from seeking certain personal information about you, or spreading it once they have it.

Examples: Your neighbor should not go through your garbage looking for your prescription. And even if you publicly told the entire neighborhood that you had a disease, they should seriously consider whether to divulge that to anyone else.

Autonomy: A person's right of self-government, or the capacity to self-govern. A person's ability to self-govern is ordinarily thought to involve them choosing which actions to take or rules to follow. Some level of outside interference with that choice, or attempts to influence that choice, may diminish autonomy.

Examples: A drug addict on a high who acts to take more drugs may not be autonomous: their action is conditioned by their addiction and the current influence of drugs. As another example, there is nothing inconsistent between autonomy and a rule punishing murder: that is a rule you are expected to govern yourself by.

Personal Identity: The attributes that make you the same you over time, usually those properties to which you feel a special sense of attachment (as opposed to a government ID number, or our living cells, which "identify" us over time). My personal identity is those things I take to "define me as a person" or "make me the person I am."

Examples: Some people think that a personal identity cannot include group attributes, but only those things that distinguish you from others. Some say the opposite, that group membership can be core to identity. Ascriptive identity is the group others place you in; self-identity is the group you place yourself in.

Three Theories of Privacy:

Democratic: Privacy exists to protect all the information you need to form your own political opinions, engage in political expression, form political associations, and make democratic decisions. This may include artistic, cultural, social and scientific information.

Power: Privacy exists to give you control over all the information that could be used to force or coerce you into any action (especially into personal obedience, or lack of resistance to government) by anyone who would control us with that info. We should not be dominated.

Property: Privacy exists to give you an ownership claim over all information about you. Your control over info about you is exactly like your control over land or personal property: you can do with it what you wish; give it, sell it or dispose of it as you wish; even waste or destroy it.