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November 2nd, 2025

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PHIL 355E 202510

Case Study Three: *The Meta AI App is a Privacy Disaster*

In the article ‘The Meta AI App is a Privacy Disaster’, Amanda Silberling argues that Meta is at fault for allowing users to share their Personal Identifiable Information (PII). However, I disagree with Silberling’s claim. I argue that Meta is not at fault for its users’ actions because the company clearly states in their **Terms of Service** how data is collected and used, and users must consent to these terms before using the app. To further support my argument, I will introduce the concept of **Social Contract Theory**. This theory will provide a basis for understanding the ethical agreement between Meta and its users. I will then describe the ethical issue in Silberling’s article, followed by an application of the theory to the ethical challenge, and close-out by stating what the individuals at Meta should have done instead.

Social Contract theory is the co-operation and mutual agreement of guidelines. According to Thomas Hobbes, in order to live in a civilized society there must be *“a set of moral rules’ as well as a government to enforce these rules and protect (Quinn p. 79)”*. In today’s times, social contract theory can be applied to organizations and the use of their software. For example, when users create accounts with companies, they must first agree to a term of service prompt before accessing the platform. By agreeing, users consent to follow the rules of the platform and give the company permission to collect, use, and share their information. Moreover, by agreeing to the “digital contract” both parties have a responsibility of honesty, integrity, and transparency.

The ethical issue in Silberling’s article centers around what users are willingly putting into Meta AI chats. Most of what has been discovered is sensitive information such as court documents, home-addresses, financial details, relationship issues and personal engine searches. To make matters worse, users have also used Meta to ask for advice on committing crimes, while some have actually admitted to committing crimes. Furthermore, users of the Meta app also have the choice of sharing and posting text conversations, audio, and images publicly. Silberling blames the developers of the app claiming that this issue should have been foreseen prior to the app’s release.

By applying Social Contract theory to this case, it becomes clear that Meta is not ethically at fault. The theory focuses on agreements and fairness between parties. Meta clearly explains in its Terms of Service how user data will be collected, stored, and used; and users agree to these terms before using the app. This creates a mutual understanding; Meta provided transparency, and users accepted the responsibility. Expanding further, users who share sensitive

information despite the warnings are responsible for their own actions. Meta has fulfilled its part of the agreement and gave users the chance to consent.

There are a few things that Meta could have done differently to make the agreement with users even clearer. For example, they could have made warnings prompts bigger and more vibrant in color to catch the user's attention and prevent the sharing of sensitive information. Safety tips and reminders of the terms of service can also be prompted to the user as well. These steps could potentially prevent security risks of personal information being leaked.

Overall, looking at this situation with Social Contract Theory in mind, it is clear that Meta has not done anything that is unethical. The company was transparent with its users and how data would be used, and users agreed to its terms. While Meta could have done more to give safeguards and extra guidance, users are still at fault for their own actions.