Social media companies’ practice of gathering huge amounts of user data without the users’ consent poses major ethical issues especially in terms of privacy and transparency. From a deontological ethics view that honours duties based on moral rules it is wrong for companies to gather data without first gaining user consent. Social media platforms must obtain explicit consent to collect and use personal data because users have a basic right to privacy (D'Arcy & Young, 2012).

Social media companies create complex and vague privacy policies that allow them to exploit the principle of informed consent because they use them to collect users' data despite the fact that almost no users read or comprehend these policies. Lack of transparency threatens user trust and exposes data to potential misuse and breaches. The Facebook–Cambridge Analytica scandal showed how users’ data was exploited without proper consent leading to public outrage and investigation from regulators after the data practices were made too opaque.

A utilitarian might support the practice of non-informed data collection because it provides users with personalized content and targeted advertisements. However, user autonomy and privacy should take precedence over such advantages. The proper handling of user data requires social media companies to guarantee that users understand data collection and usage processes.

Social media companies need to place ethical standards at the top of their priorities and obtain explicit user consent while maintaining full transparency. Protecting user privacy through these practices not only establishes trust but also keeps social media companies compliant with changing data protection standards. According to D’Arcy and Young (2012), the protection of user privacy remains vital for maintaining ethical standards within the networked public sphere.

**Works Cited**

D'Arcy, A., & Young, T. M. (2012). Ethics and social media: Implications for sociolinguistics in the networked public. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 16(4), 532-546.