



PART 2: WHO BENEFITS FROM AI?

Manisha Tank 00:08

Okay, everyone. Hello. If you're still standing, having a chat, conversation, whatever it might be, please come and sit down. Lovely to see some familiar faces in the crowd. Someone said to us backstage that there was a lot of interest in this panel. No pressure, but we want to make sure we serve you, the audience, in the best way possible. So, it's brilliant to have with me our two panelists. We have with us Joel Kaplan, who is Meta's VP of Global Public Policy. I hope I got that right, the title. Usually based in Washington, but spends a lot of time traveling. And, I think to some extent, you're heavily involved, aren't you, Joel, in operationalizing this mission that Meta has, and particularly a 6,500-word manifesto on AI from your boss, Mark Zuckerberg. So, we'll talk a little bit about that. The future is for everyone, which is argued by Meta. Also joining him is Kai Fong Chng. Thank you so much, Kai Fong, for being with us. Singapore's Permanent Secretary for Digital Development and Information. And you are reputed to be a strategic architect when it comes to policy—

Kai Fong Chng 01:18

You're very kind.

Manisha Tank 01:19

—here in Singapore. And he often downplays these sorts of accolades, as you've seen. Okay, but let's get the conversation started. Now, we all have been talking a lot about AI. We've been seeing a number of headlines recently about AI, whether it's good or bad. Existential in some cases. But we know that it's moving at a breathtaking pace, and the big challenge is making sure that the benefits of AI are fairly and equally distributed. Without getting into the weeds of economic policy or economic theory, which can be something that can go very deep and confusing. We need to talk about pragmatic and practical implications here. So, let's kick off, though, with a bit of a scene-setter question for both of you. Kai, let me start with you, and Joel, then I'll take it to you. When we use a term such as artificial intelligence or super intelligence, first of all, which of those two terms would you prefer to use? Because there's a big debate now around this, particularly after some of the news headlines that we've seen coming out of Washington.

Kai Fong Chng 02:31

You're talking about AI versus SI? I think we are referring to the same things. So, I'll stick with the usual nomenclature—

Manisha Tank 02:36

Okay.

Kai Fong Chng 02:37

—AI, since I'm a Singaporean, not an American. So, I'll leave Joel to do all the technical explanation of what AGI and ASI sort of means. But I saw a tweet that could be bordering on being a little bit sexist, so pardon me, but I thought it's an accurate description of what AI is today, at least from my perspective. Right? Because they are saying that Silicon Valley, we have the rage about agents now, and I saw a tweet, and it says that, "Silicon Valley keeps building me the husband when actually all I want is a wife." And what do you mean by that? A husband is someone that needs to be told what to do. Remember the eggs when you shop. This is how to cook this particular dish. So, these are one-off random things that don't really change your life per se. You need to book a flight, you need to make sure you get there by a particular time, and you need precise instructions. I say this because I'm guilty as charged on this. But actually, what you want is a wife who really knows what's on the family calendar, who remembers there's a birthday party on Saturday, who understands the full context of what you're doing, who remembers someone needs a dentist appointment, that sort of thing. And I think right now we are at the husband stage and not the wife stage.

Manisha Tank 04:02

Hmm. A very interesting analogy. Yeah, it does border on the sexist, I have to say. And a bit of a window into your life, but I get your point. Joel, let's take it to you, which essentially is the wives are the bosses. I like that one. I'm going to put these on for a second. I'm sure some of you know what these are. How do these augment my life, and what have they got to do with what Meta is calling super intelligence? What does that term actually mean?

Joel Kaplan 04:33

Yeah. Well, thank you for the question. I'm also going to stay away from that analogy. So, first of all, Meta's been calling it super intelligence for a long time. We're not new to that. When we sort of rebooted our efforts a year or so ago, we actually called our lab the Meta Superintelligence Lab. And for us, super intelligence is really about intelligence that is greater than human capacity. And while that can mean lots of different things, it can cut across a number of different domains. What's probably most relevant for us is not so much the word super intelligence, it's the word that Mark uses before that, which is personal super intelligence. And what we're building is super intelligence that can be widely distributed and in the hands of everyone. And that's very consistent with the philosophy that's governed Meta, what used to be called Facebook before that, for more than 20 years, which is that we're about putting technology into people's hands. And we think that the future is for everyone. It's giving people this superpower, this intelligence greater than human capacity, to help them achieve what they want to achieve in their life, what their goals are in their personal life, in their professional life, what their desires are, and to Kai's point, helps them actually achieve it, not just provide answers to very specific prompts. And so the latest developments that Meta has released is in the field of agentic AI. So, we released a product called Muse a couple of weeks ago in the US, should be coming to Singapore very soon, which is all about agentic AI. It's about AI that helps you achieve the things that you want to achieve and takes things off your plate so that you can focus on the human aspects of your life. And the glasses that you put on are part of the family of wearables that we think is going to become the future platform for delivering or accessing this personal super intelligence. And that version right there is called the LISA. It was released in partnership with LISA from BLACKPINK. And we think those are going to be a huge hit.

Manisha Tank 07:00

Just one more time. There you go. It's saying something to me right now. I'm not sure what that was. But the thing that is interesting about that is, so I asked you backstage, what is the sort of basic cost, and you talked about, what was it? About \$250?

Joel Kaplan 07:18

Yeah, in that neighborhood.

Manisha Tank 07:19

But this is the thing. So, cost when it comes to AI is something that's also being talked about a lot. Kai, how do you, especially when you're sort of seeing companies here in Singapore, you want to see AI being used as an economic benefit, as a societal benefit. How is cost being looked at? How do you think about it? How do you think about it? Because it can be prohibitive, actually. If you say to somebody \$250, there are parts of the world where that is just too much money.

Kai Fong Chng 07:51

Yeah. So, actually, let me just build on what Joel was saying, right. In terms of economic policy, Singapore does practice some sort of industrial policy. We work with MNCs, they invest here. We give them incentives, and we work with them to build things here. But I think with AI, there's a chance that we should invert that strategy a little bit more and focus more on the SMEs and the gig workers. And this is what Joel talked about, really making things accessible. That's how we have been thinking about it. So, we've been putting a lot of money in terms of making the diffusion of AI tools broad-based. That's why we have SkillsFuture. And anyone who signs up for a course, they instantly get six months of a premium subscription. That's basically just to give people the basic skills and understanding so that they're not afraid of AI. And then we work with companies like Meta, OpenAI, Anthropic, and a whole bunch of them, and we try to democratize the use of it by running hackathons. In fact, some of the more interesting examples I've seen are just like, for example, property agents using some of these agents that Joel is talking about to develop slide decks for their clients. So, they no longer need an office or back office to support them, but they can actually hand it over to an agent to work. I think you're increasingly seeing that, and I think this is a real benefit for SMEs—for gig workers. If we can actually enable that, then people won't be so afraid of it, then there'll be new opportunities that you unlock. I can trust that the bigger companies and multinationals, they all have the capability to try to figure AI out for themselves. But what's impressive now is that I think the tables have turned. And it's not even in the basic stuff, right? Like, for example, I'm astounded now by the amount of young people entering the semiconductor space, working with companies for tape out of their chips, rethinking chip architectures. All that was not possible because innovation was very capital-intensive. But right now, I think AI makes a lot of that possible.

Manisha Tank 10:00

Mm. And we're seeing Singapore certainly reaping some of the benefits. Joel, did you want to respond?

Joel Kaplan 10:04

Well, the one thing I was going to say about, I mean, the glasses is one way of accessing Meta AI and eventually Muse. But for most people, will access Meta AI through the apps that they've grown accustomed to using for free. So, close to four billion people around the world use Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and they're able to access Meta AI for free. And Muse, which is a standalone app, is available for free for most of the uses that individuals are

going to want to put it to. There will be premium pricing for those who are sort of power users. But our whole philosophy from the beginning has been to distribute this technology as widely as possible because we believe in the power of people and the incredible things that people will create when they have this technology at their disposal. So, a big part of our vision for personal super intelligence is that it's widely distributed and available to as many people around the world as possible. The other way that that's going to be accomplished, I think we're going to probably get to this, is through making our models itself, the underlying foundation model, available through open source. I think that is going to be one of the most democratizing aspects of the investment that we're making today.

Manisha Tank 11:17

So, let's talk more about that because your vision of an open-source world when it comes to the models is in conflict with the conversation that's happening at the moment vis-à-vis some of the other big tech companies. So, OpenAI and Anthropic, they don't necessarily want that. And we are having a very big debate in the world right now. AI is creeping into dinner party, not even creeping in, it is dominating some dinner party conversations. You might not have said that a year ago, but that's when you have the likes of Jacob Coxon appearing on platforms talking about existential risk connected to AI. So, actually, Meta has doubled down on the open-source approach. This is the time on this platform to sort of speak to the benefits of that and why you say no to a more regulated, closed version.

Joel Kaplan 12:11

Yeah. Well, so those are sort of two different dimensions or two different axes, open versus closed and the type of regulation, and there's some overlap between them. But I think we should talk first about just the distinction between open and closed. So, a couple of the frontier labs that you mentioned, their business model is selling access to the model that they've developed, and you can understand that because they're investing hundreds of billions of dollars in CapEx to develop these models. That doesn't happen to be our business model. We're investing the hundreds of billions of dollars in CapEx to develop models, to build products that are useful to the people who use our services, like the ones I talked about, Muse. That allows us to actually make the foundation model itself, the LLM itself, available through open source, which means that developers, universities, countries, researchers around the world can actually take advantage of that massive investment that we've made, and download the model for free and then build on top of that. And what that means is that they can control the model. They don't have to send their information back through an API to a company sitting in the United States. They can customize it with local data, with sensitive proprietary data, and build all sorts of new applications for it. We think that's an incredibly powerful democratization tool for making sure that as many different people, companies, countries, regions can benefit from this investment. I think there's going to be plenty of room and demand for both the closed-source companies as well as open-source. But I think as regulators approach some of the questions, one of the things they really need to be mindful of is the need to protect open source so that more people, more companies, more countries have access to this technology.

Manisha Tank 14:12

Yep. Okay.

Kai Fong Chng 14:13

I can share it from the sovereign point of view, if you like.

Manisha Tank 14:15

Yeah. Go for it.

Kai Fong Chng 14:16

So, for us, obviously as a small country and a sovereign country, we support open source wholeheartedly. In fact, what Joel is describing is basically open weight. So, your open-weight model from Meta. Reflection just released one. Mistral says it's going to release its latest model. But the Chinese open-weight models are pretty good, and they are very vital part of the ecosystem. If you look at token usage on OpenRouter, for example, it has flipped, right? Many more use tokens from open-weight models now and Chinese open-weight models, because they are more cost-efficient and also because you can post-train on top of them for specific use cases. So, we wholeheartedly support. In fact, we have an arrangement where we routinely test and download open-weight models. We continue to do so. In fact, I would go one step further to say, we also wholeheartedly support open source. By open source, I mean your training data, your recipes are all out there. That's not currently the norm. There's only a handful of people doing it right now. But that's where we like to go because I think it's important that every country has access to even the capability of training or pre-training your own model. While I say that for open weight and open source, we still believe that there's a role to play, there's an important role to play for frontier models. And so, if you look at all the coding stuff that's done in government, we use the best models. We use OpenAI, we use Claude, and we will continue to do so because we think that for some tasks, you really need more sophisticated, more complex intelligence. So, that's not going to go away. But like it or not, as we agnetify more and more of our work processes and workflows, open-weight models will become important.

Manisha Tank 16:08

As we're talking, Kai, about making sure that the benefits of AI are distributed and when we talk about distribution, we're talking about people throughout the world being able to benefit. But as you have both just illustrated, all of the core research was done in Silicon Valley. These models have been developed in Silicon Valley. Is there a question to be answered around digital dependency? Is that a problem?

Kai Fong Chng 16:36

Oh, again, as a bureaucrat, it's my job to think about such things. I do think that the debate over sovereign AI is a bit overplayed and overstated because it is not so easy to be sovereign and completely independent of any one company or any one country per se. So, the key then for us is to think through, as we map through, what areas are we dependent on and how easy is it for us to switch. And that's what we've been doing. So, for example, even though I said that as a baseline, we do use the frontier models, whether Claude or OpenAI. Actually, if I need to switch, if that happens, we'll be prepared to switch. It may take some time, but we have to be able to switch. And that's why open-weight models become a lot more important because those you own, those you post-train on top, that's something that you own and you can control.

Manisha Tank 17:32

Okay. And just briefly, can I just ask one more thing about this? Obviously, President Donald Trump, he has decided to go for a voluntary, morally binding White House accord on super intelligence as he understands super intelligence to be. But then does that force the rest of the world to play some form of catch-up? Does it mean that we'll end up with some kind of fragmented framework around making sure that everybody wins from AI? Do you want to go ahead, Joel?

Joel Kaplan 18:06

Sure, I can start with that. Look, I think the accord that you're talking about, that the Trump White House arrived at with all of the leading US frontier labs, was a really important step. Because basically all of the labs committed to implementing a series of controls themselves that require independent teams within the company to assess safety, independent evaluators from outside the company to do so, to make sure that we're being transparent about the evaluations that we run, both in our training of our models and our deployment, and then also to have independent committees of the board review each of the model releases to make sure they're being done consistent with those frameworks and those evaluations. The fact that each of the companies committed to those, to having controls like that, I think is a very important step. Certainly, I take the president's point that it's morally binding. I think it's likely to be more than that. In the US, there are liability regimes that I think each of the companies will be held to. And because basically all of the non-Chinese frontier labs were present in that meeting, I think that is really an important step. Now, are you ultimately going to get the same type of commitments from the Chinese labs, which are the other sort of major labs that are close to the frontier? I think that remains to be seen, and that's one of the big challenges for international diplomacy. But I think at least with the US, where we are still leading on the frontier, to have that kind of commitment is an important step and one that we were very pleased to be a part of.

Manisha Tank 19:56

Okay.

Kai Fong Chng 19:56

Yeah. From our perspective, we welcome this, but morals is not a great foundation to stand on, so we need more than that. I do think that even with this step in the right direction, hopefully it will evolve towards some sort of a more international or an independent assessment. And I think the UK does have a role to play here with its AI Safety Institute, which I have high regard for. But also, I think the US has actually been doing a lot of track two dialogues with the Chinese on different aspects of AI safety. I've been keeping track of that because a lot of—Carnegie actually organizes it, and I think their second or third run, and they do it in Singapore. And you'll be surprised that actually even the Chinese open-weight frontier labs, they're beginning to take AI quite seriously and AI safety very—every year they have a risk register. And you can tell that actually the two sides are converging on some of the risks.

Manisha Tank 21:01

Okay. We're going to talk now about who benefits from or who profits. Because this is another benefit. You only have to look at what's been happening on stock markets to see how much of a run-up there has been in terms of investments in this technology over the last, whether it's on the hardware side or sort of in the deployment or the companies that are developing these models. And then you hear about prospective IPOs from OpenAI and Anthropic and these huge numbers and the billions of dollars, right? And so the question then becomes, well, how does everybody benefit? Because none of these models can work or function without all of this wonderful, amazing data that we, the people, feed in. I would like to get both of your feedback on this because there is a debate emerging, and not even just emerging, it's been going on for a while, about who should own the success of AI and who should benefit from it, who should profit from it. And there have been editorials in *The Business Times*, for example, from very prominent economists here in Singapore saying we should have AI data sovereignty, these sorts of questions. How do you respond to that, Kai?

Kai Fong Chng 22:09

Well, I would say where we stand today, who benefits currently, I think are the chip companies. Because I think if you look at the numbers, I don't think our companies are benefiting from it yet. There's a lot of AI transformation initiatives going on. But can I draw that causal link between that and whether there's an uplift in revenues and all that? I think we're still seeing very limited evidence of that. The theory is that it would happen but I think it's a hard slog to actually get that to happen. Simply because there's a lot of legacy mindsets. There's organizational barriers that you have to actually break through. It's really not a technology thing. But because you're starting from not ground zero, you have to reinvent your existing processes, review policies, that's going to take a lot of time, and that needs to translate in additional revenue. So, we're not seeing that yet. And so long as we don't see that, that question doesn't hold, right? The benefits are not spreading out to the wider economy. I do hope that that eventually happens. A lot of it is what we do with the companies and whether we enable our workers to learn how to use AI better, but we are still in the early innings.

Manisha Tank 23:28

Joel.

Joel Kaplan 23:29

Yeah, I'm going to take a slightly more near-term optimistic approach to answer that question. We're releasing a poll that we did with YouGov today in the APAC region of small businesses, which says that 80 percent, four in five small businesses today are already using AI in some way. They're using it to help with their back office. They're using it to help with ordering, to communicate with customers. Now, 80 percent of them also say they need help in figuring out how to use it more effectively. And between those two things, I think you can see the possibility for a massive distribution of the benefits of AI. On Meta platforms alone, we have 200 million small businesses who use one of our platforms to help run their business. If four-fifths of those are using AI and we can help them upskill, and we can help them learn how to deploy these technologies as they emerge and as we make them more simple and more intuitive, Muse being our example, there will be others. I think there's the possibility for just an explosion in productivity and for these small businesses to be able to do the kinds of things that up until now only large enterprises have been able to afford and to have the expertise to accomplish. So, I think the opportunity to really distribute the benefits of AI economically are right in front of us, and I think you're going to begin to see many, many businesses, particularly, I think, in this region of the world where so much of the economy runs on small businesses. I think you're going to see benefits begin to accrue very quickly.

Manisha Tank 25:22

Kai, I want to—

Kai Fong Chng 25:23

That's what we're trying to do.

Manisha Tank 25:24

—yeah. Go on.

Kai Fong Chng 25:25

So, hopefully we'll get there. That's why we're working and partnering with all these companies to actually roll that out to SMEs and individuals and trying to equip them, get them much more confident with the technology. There is, however, some degree of anxiety, unfortunately—

Manisha Tank 25:40

Absolutely.

Kai Fong Chng 25:40

—within our workforce. I think workers are rightly worried that some of AI might take away some of their tasks or even jobs. And the key is to give them confidence and then work with the companies to try to help them redesign their jobs. Easier said than done, to be honest. And so it also depends on the pace of progress, I think, of AI. If it's a gradual thing, I'm fully confident that we can adjust, but if it's a very steep increase, I think there'll be some dislocation, which we have to watch out for.

Manisha Tank 26:13

Okay. Sadly, we only have just under four minutes left. But I want to spin out one last question to the both of you, which is more of a philosophical question. Because if we talk about the benefits of AI, we have to think about what is a benefit. Is it just the economic benefit that we focus on, or is it, as I saw in a play in London about John Maynard Keynes recently. His question was always, what is a good life? So, when it comes to the context of what you might call general super intelligence or artificial intelligence and its use in the world, what is a real benefit from both of your perspectives? And very briefly, overall, the mission is that we get there, right? Joel, let me put that to you first, and sorry for the time.

Joel Kaplan 27:05

Yeah, no, that's okay. So, first of all, at a societal level, I think there are going to be extraordinary benefits in things like health care, in curing disease, in the advance of science. But at a personal level, and again, that really is our focus at Meta, I think the ability of humans to use these tools to be able to create and bring to life in the world the things that previously they've only been able to imagine, is an extraordinary benefit. Before AI, unless you had very specific training or skills or access, there are many things that you could maybe imagine but never accomplish. And I think AI is going to serve as that bridge. Superintelligence is going to serve as that bridge, that if you can imagine it, you're now going to have the tools very inexpensively, if not free, you're going to have the tools to bring that to life. And it's also going to free you up to do other things that you'd rather be spending your time on than some of the more mundane aspects of day-to-day life and existence. So, I think those are going to be the benefits, invention, creation, freedom from some of the less exhilarating aspects of life, so that you can focus on the things that really bring you fulfillment and allow you to flourish.

Manisha Tank 28:34

Kai, you get the last word.

Kai Fong Chng 28:35

Well, in the same vein, clearly there are benefits of AI, right? It removes all the menial tasks, it makes life a lot easier and all that. But the danger is that we outsource our thinking. We get into AI psychosis if we use AI too

much. And that's why in Singapore, even as we are promoting AI usage and trying to drive AI transformation, actually, we're doubling down on a few other things. One of them is we just started a reading movement. I think that's really important. We're going against the tide, to be honest, but I think we need to promote reading because it's setting aside time, deep reflection, trying to find time for yourself to just think on your own rather than through a screen. I think that's absolutely important. And then the other thing that we're doubling down on is actually building up our social capital. If you read Nicholas Thompson and a whole bunch of *The Atlantic* articles about the epidemic of loneliness, we're seeing our young people having less and less friends. So, how do we create social connections? That's not the reason why GovTech had the dating app, by the way. But how do we create more social connections, get people to interact more? So, I think we need to double down on our efforts to make humans more humans.

Manisha Tank 29:55

How ironic that we end on that note, but also I feel quite fulfilled ending on that note, because this is all about us just being better humans in my world. Thank you both.

Kai Fong Chng 30:07

Thank you.

Manisha Tank 30:07

We've got minus two seconds left on the clock, so that was perfect. I hope that you all got something out of this, and you feel more enlightened walking out of the room today. Thank you to both of our guests.

Kai Fong Chng 30:19

Thank you.

Joel Kaplan 30:19

Thank you.

Manisha Tank 30:19

To Joel and Kai, and please enjoy the rest of your day here at the conference.

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