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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

IS THE MEDIUM THE MESSAGE?

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DOMESTICATING THE MONSTER WITH MARSHALL MCLUHAN



Marshall McLuhan - "The Gutenberg Galaxy: Understanding Media"

Harold Innis - "Minerva's Owl"



'The medium is the message'

- And AI is the new medium
- It will be content for a new medium
- But we don't know what that is yet...

MARSHALL MCLUHAN

What are you doing?

- McLuhan's Key Concept: "The Medium is the Message"
- When a new medium emerges, it initially absorbs and reshapes the content of an older medium.
- Over time, the medium itself — the way it structures our experience — becomes more important than the content it carries.



IF WE MAP IT MCLUHAN STYLE

Old medium becomes content for...



Speech



Theater



Print (Books)



Movies



Television



Internet



Search Engine



Artificial Intelligence



Autonomous Environment/Augmented Identity





A TWENTY-FIVE HUNDRED YEAR FLOW

- **Speech** → becomes content for **plays** (early theater)
- **Plays** → become printed in **books** (movable type, Gutenberg press)
- **Books** → inspire **movies** (visual storytelling with dialogue and text)
- **Movies** → become **TV shows** (broadcast and serialized storytelling)
- **TV** → drives the development of the **Internet** (video, interactive content)
- **Internet** → spawns **Search** (Google, indexing knowledge)
- **Search** → leads into **AI** (automated processing, understanding, and creation of information)

And now AI...?

- Following McLuhan's pattern, **AI itself** will become the **content** of a new medium.

BUT WHAT IS THAT NEW MEDIUM?



Speculatively...

1) AI-to-Agency: AI becomes **autonomous agents** acting on behalf of humans — organizing life, systems, and thinking independently (e.g., agents managing health, education, government, creativity).

2) AI-to-Environment: Instead of being tools, AIs might become **the environment we live inside** — like an “intelligent atmosphere” shaping daily experiences.

3) AI-to-Identity: Humans might begin **merging cognitively** with AI, meaning AI doesn't just assist but **becomes part of human thinking** (brain-AI symbiosis).

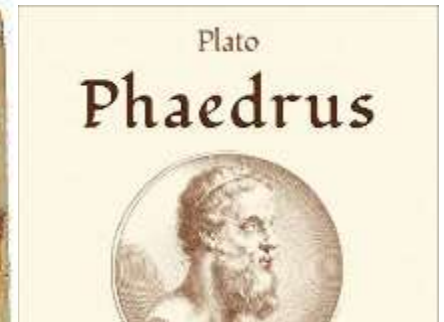
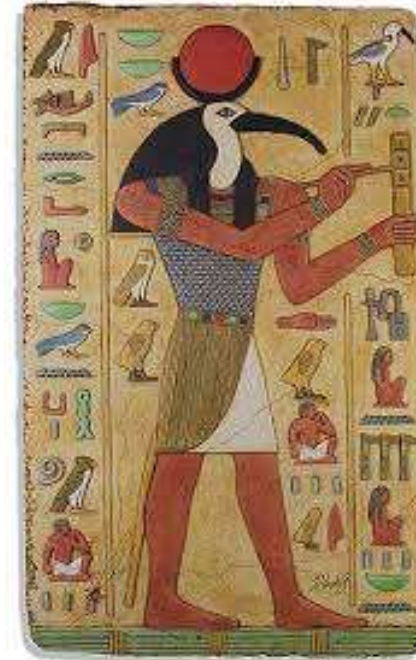


EVERY NEW MEDIUM IS SEEN AS A **THREAT!**
TRUE THEN? TRUE NOW?



PLATO

- In his dialogue "Phaedrus," Plato (through the voice of Socrates) criticizes the invention of writing.
 - He tells the myth of the Egyptian god Theuth inventing writing and offering it as a gift to the king Thamus.
 - Theuth claims that writing will improve memory and wisdom.
 - Thamus disagrees: "It will implant forgetfulness in their souls. They will cease to exercise memory because they rely on that which is written, calling things to remembrance no longer from within themselves, but by means of external marks."
- In other words: Writing weakens the mind because it replaces living memory with external memory (text).
- Instead of truly knowing, people will only seem wise because they can reference knowledge rather than embody it.



TIMELINE: FEAR OF NEW KNOWLEDGE TECHNOLOGIES

Era	New Technology	Fear	Outcome
🏺 ~370 BCE	Writing (Plato's time)	Memory and true wisdom will decline. People will rely on external marks instead of inner knowledge.	Writing expanded philosophy, history, and science. Memory shifted from oral to written tradition.
🖨️ ~1450 CE	Printing Press (Gutenberg)	People will stop memorizing, stop debating, and trust books blindly. Knowledge will become too widespread and dangerous.	Printed books sparked the Renaissance, scientific revolution, and democratized learning.
📻 ~1920s	Radio & Broadcast Media	Passive consumption of information. Fear of propaganda and mass brainwashing.	Radio and TV created shared cultural experiences but raised issues around media control.
🌐 ~1990s	Internet	Information overload. Loss of deep reading and sustained attention. Fake news.	Massive global access to information; new literacy skills developed (e.g., critical web literacy).
🔍 ~2000s	Search Engines (Google)	People won't need to remember anything; they'll just "Google it." Mental laziness.	Search engines reshaped education and research, emphasizing information evaluation over memorization.
🤖 ~2020s	AI (Large Language Models, Creative AI)	Humans will lose the ability to think, create, solve problems themselves. Machines will replace cognitive work.	Still unfolding: humans may shift toward meta-skills — critical thinking, judgment, creativity beyond replication.



WHAT IS THE TAKEAWAY?



- Each time a new medium emerges; it frees humans from one kind of mental labour... but demands they get better at another.
- Plato feared we'd forget.
- Later, thinkers feared we'd stop debating.
- Now, we fear we'll stop creating.

But over and over, humans have redefined what it means to "know," "think," and "be wise".

This will happen with AI



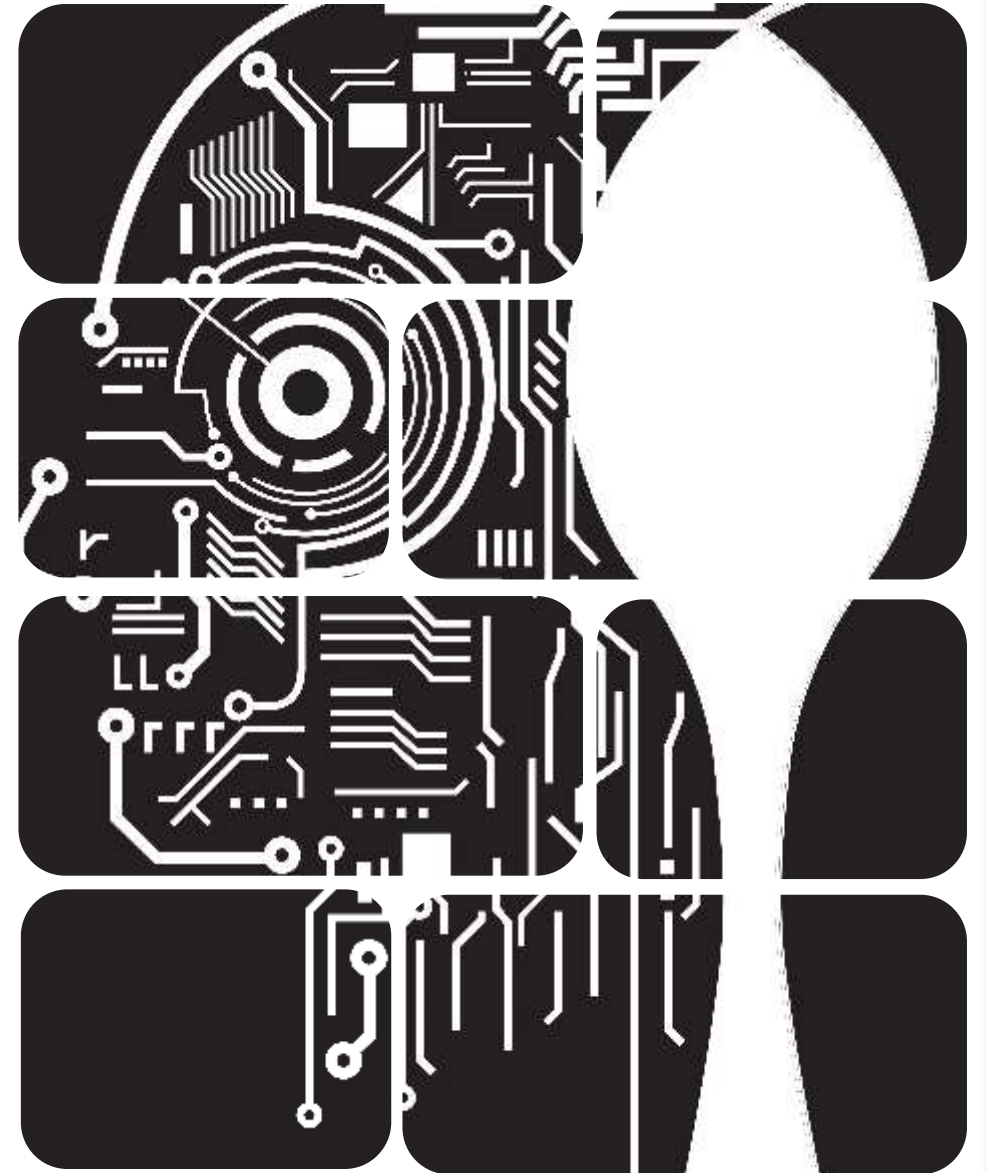
THE FUTURE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Living with AI

1. AI AS AN EXTENSION OF SELF

- AI won't just be a tool — it will become part of how people think, remember, decide, and feel.
- Personal AI systems (like memory assistants, emotional coaches, decision advisors) will be tailored to each individual, almost like a digital subconscious.
- In a way, people will have “externalized minds” that they partly inhabit — extending memory, logic, creativity beyond their biological brains.

Identity shifts from being purely biological to bio-digital



2. AI AS CURATOR OF REALITY

- Already, algorithms (news feeds, recommendation engines) heavily filter what we see and know.
- In 10 years, AI will curate personal versions of reality even more deeply: What you see, what you hear, who you interact with — all filtered through an intelligent lens.
- People's worlds could become increasingly personalized, divergent, and immersive.

Experience will be fragmented, and people might live inside AI-mediated realities almost like custom dream-worlds. 🧑🏻🧑🏻



3. AI AND MULTIPLICITY OF IDENTITY

- With AI, people will be able to project multiple versions of themselves:
- Different digital personas for work, relationships, creativity, entertainment.
- This could liberate identity (fluidity, creativity) or fracture it (disconnection, alienation).

You might not have a "single" self anymore — you'd have a constellation of selves, each managed partly by AI. 🛡️



4. AI AND THE BATTLE FOR AUTHENTICITY

- As AI systems generate more content, mimic personalities, and even forge deepfakes, authenticity will become a core struggle.
- Trusting what's real and who is real will get harder — but also more valuable.

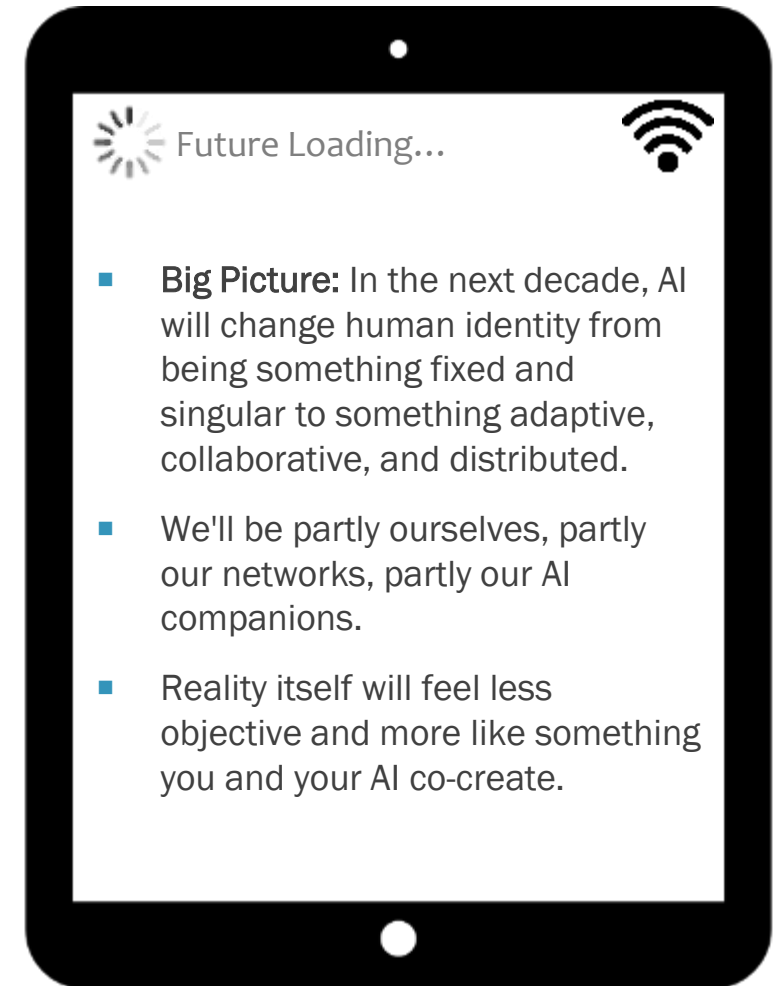
Identity will partly become about proving your realness in a sea of synthetic selves. 🔥



5. AI AS COMPANION, NOT JUST TOOL

- Many people will form emotional bonds with AI — not just using it but relating to it.
- AI will become a mirror, a therapist, a collaborator, a memory keeper.
- This raises huge ethical and existential questions: Can an AI be a "real" relationship?

Who are you when you are partly shaped by a machine? ✨



OBSERVATION

AI is like playing fetch

- Asking questions of AI is like playing fetch with an obedient dog
- The dog will always bring something back whether right, wrong, indifferent, off topic, or contradictory .



- The better analogy is a near sighted owner with a bad memory will throw a stick too far to a dog who may bring back the same stick or a different stick and the owner may or may not recall the stick that she threw.

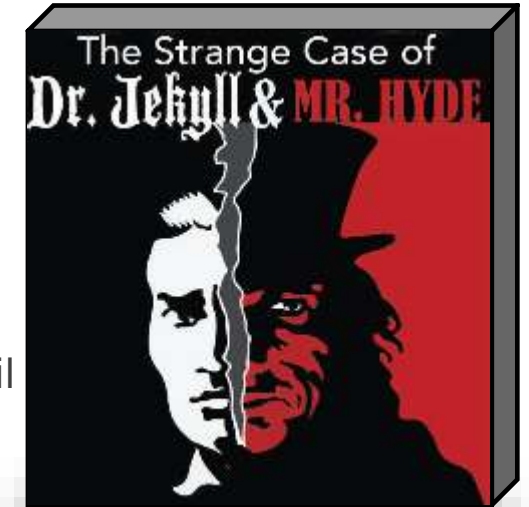
- This means that you must ask AI chatbots curated intelligent questions and be able to curate and apply critical thinking to the answers.
- So, the dog and the owner are going to get better at this over time.



OBSERVATION

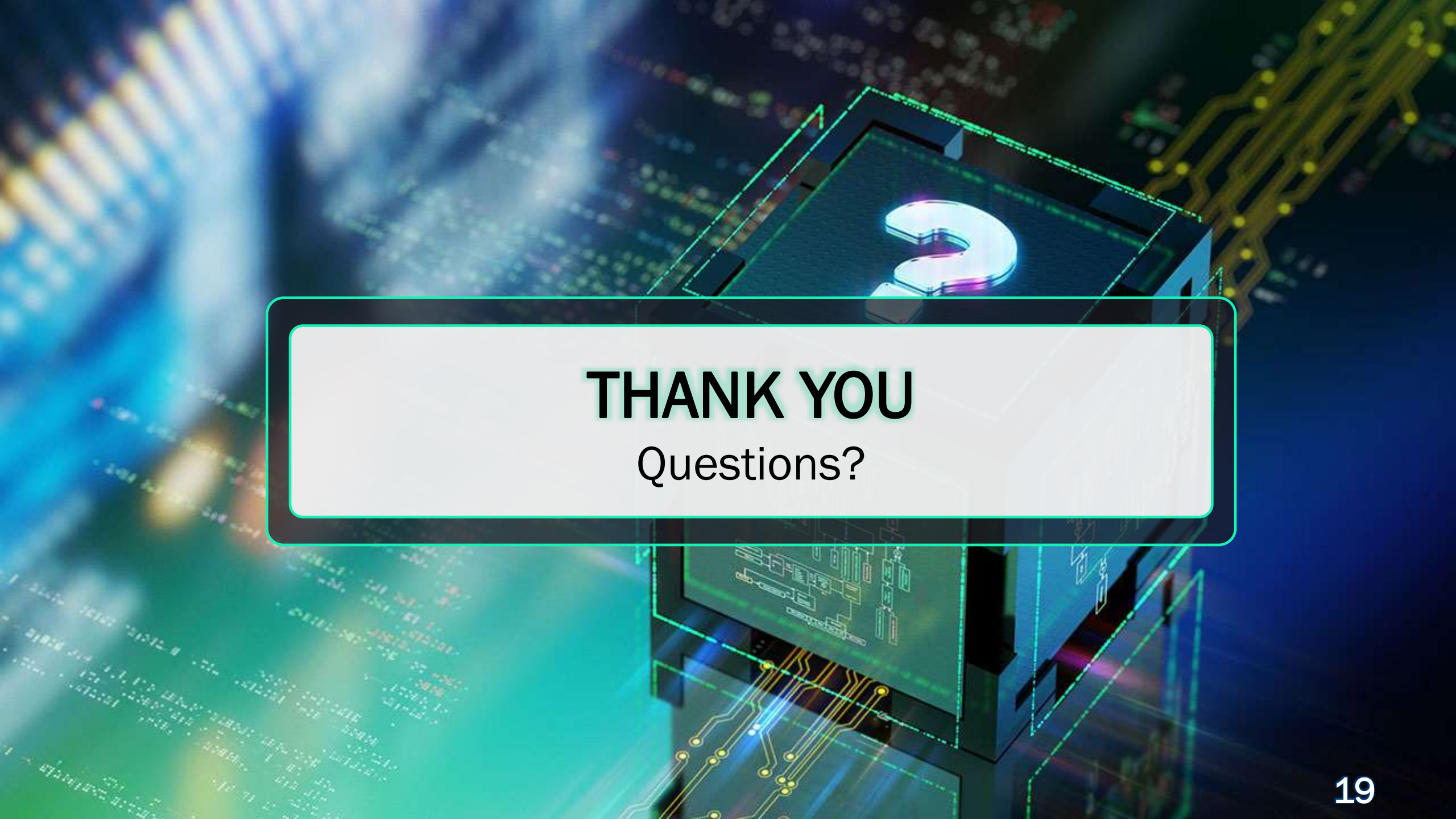
Social media favours Mr. Hyde over Dr. Jekyll

- Jekyll and Hyde are not two separate beings — they are two aspects of the same person.
- Stevenson's point: Everyone carries both good and evil inside.
- The tragedy is that Jekyll thought he could neatly separate them — but once freed, evil (Hyde) grew stronger and took over.
- It's a story about the illusion of control over our darker nature and the dangers of denying the full complexity of human identity.



- Control over social media by a few very atypical men: Musk, Zuckerberg et al.
- AI may become a handmaiden and turbocharge the forces of good and evil.





THANK YOU
Questions?